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TRANZ TALKZ

Trans artist Travis Alabanza speaks out

SUMMER OF PRIDE

Learn about this month's Pride festivals

Hey Mr DJ!

We talk to Paul Morrell - the DJ taking the UK gay scene by storm!

BRITNEY SPEARS

The Princess of Pop heads to the Midlands on her Piece of Me tour

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Motorcycle As The Rush Comes
Paul Morrell Remix
OUT NOW

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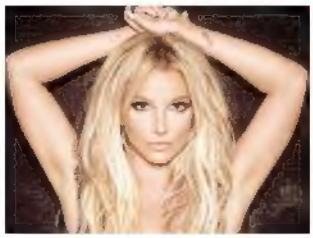

Britney Spears 39
brings her Piece Of Me Tour to the Midlands

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Have ya heard?

Birmingham Hippodrome announce 'No Kids' show

Birmingham Hippodrome has announced that a 'gender-bending' musical cabaret will show at the theatre as part of LGBT arts festival SHOUT.

No Kids reveals the personal journey that real-life couple and co-artistic directors of Ad Infinitum, Nir Paldi and George Mann, embarked upon when they asked the question: as a gay couple, should we go out of our way to have children?

Physical storytelling, gender-bending musical cabaret and verbatim theatre marry together to create a distinctly queer piece that strives to find out why so many of us feel so driven to have children.

No Kids shows at the Hippodrome on Saturday 10 November. Tickets are on sale now.

We're getting queerer!

New survey reveals startling stats about UK sexuality in 2018

Research released last month has shown that a quarter (26%) of UK adults identify as something other than 'completely heterosexual' according to the Kinsey Scale - and this rises to a third (35%) of those aged 35 to 44 and more than half (55%) of those aged 18 to 24.

The survey of 2,000 UK adults was carried out by YouGov and commissioned by media agency UM as part of UK By UM, an ongoing research project examining stereotyping in advertising. It also highlighted that 60% of Brits - including 85% of those aged 18 to 24 and 48% of those aged 55-plus, believe sexuality should be viewed on a scale, rather than simply in terms of 'gay or straight'.

The survey tells a very different story to the data compiled by the Office for National Statistics in 2016. The ONS found that only two percent of the adult population identified as something other than straight, accounting for around one million Brits. The new survey suggests the number is actually closer to 17 million.

Similarly, YouGov research from 2015 found that 49% of those aged 18 to 24 and only eight percent of those aged 60-plus self-defined as something other than completely straight. The latest survey found that the number for 18 to 24-year-olds has risen to 56%, and to 13% in the 55-plus category - statistically significant increases.

Michael Brown, head of insight at UM, commented: "The comparison of this year's anonymous data with that from the ONS might seem jarring. However, what this shows is that Kinsey was right to view sexuality as a spectrum. After all, trying to define something as complex as sexuality in binary terms is at best crude - and at worst, fantastical."

Shropshire celebrates famous gay war poet

A new brochure listing events taking place in Shropshire to mark the centenary of gay war poet Wilfred Owen's death, and the end of World War One, is now available.

The brochure has been published by Shrewsbury Heritage on behalf of Shropshire Remembers, the county's First World War partnership.

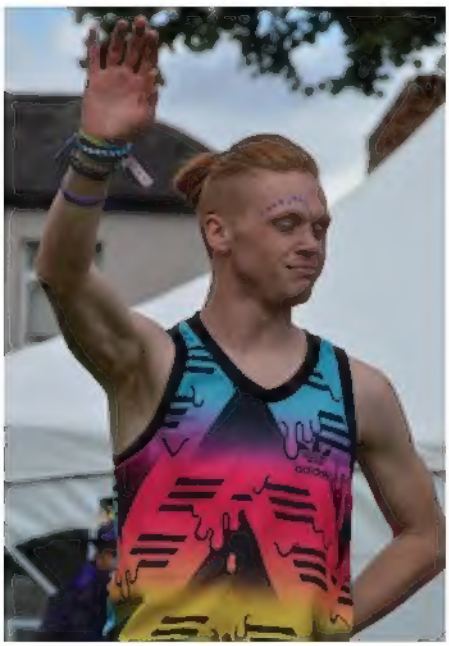
For more information about the brochure and where to access it, visit shropshireremembers.org.uk

Warwickshire Pride in search for volunteers

Warwickshire Pride is recruiting volunteers for this year's festival, which takes place at the Royal Pump Room Gardens, Leamington Spa, on Saturday 18 August.

If you'd like to get involved, pop along to Pride's volunteer signup/briefing session on Monday 13 August (from 6pm - 8pm at the Gap Community Centre, 39 Oakwood Grove, Warwick, CV34 5TD).

The evening will include a briefing on what to expect from volunteering at the event. The festival couldn't happen without the kindness and dedication of volunteers, so please do go along if you can, and do your bit on the big day.



Casting announced for **Kinky Boots** touring show

The award-winning Callum Francis will play the starring role of Lola in hit musical Kinky Boots when it visits the Midlands this autumn. Callum will be joined by Paula Lane, best known for her role as Kylie Platt in Coronation Street, and West End favourite Joel Harper-Jackson.

Inspired by true events, Kinky Boots takes its audience from a gentlemen's shoe factory in Northampton to the glamorous catwalks of Milan.

Charlie Price is struggling to live up to his father's expectation that he'll continue the family shoe-making business. With the factory's future hanging in the balance, help arrives in the unlikely but spectacular form of Lola, a fabulous performer in need of some sturdy new stilettos.

Kinky Boots shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tuesday 16 - Saturday 27 October; Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre, Monday 28 January - Saturday 9 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Monday 11 - Saturday 23 March; and Nottingham's Theatre Royal, Monday 27 May - Saturday 8 June.

From Benidorm to Brum: Hit TV series takes to the stage

The writer of hit TV series Benidorm is to star in the stage version of the show when it visits Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre over the Christmas period.

Derren Litten will play the role of Derek during Benidorm Live's second-city stop-off (3 - 29 December).

Commenting on the news, Derren said: "I'm so excited to be joining the cast in Birmingham this Christmas. It's been 25 years since I've been on a stage, so I guess you could say I'm back by popular demand! I won't lie, I'm pretty scared at the prospect of acting and singing in such an amazing theatre, but if I get nervous and forget my lines, I'll just say it was a last-minute rewrite!"

Have ya heard?

Derby Pride announces 2018 line-up

Organisers of Derbyshire LGBT+ Pride have announced the line-up for this year's festival.

The event, which takes place on Saturday 8 September on Derby's Curzon Street, will see, among others, drag superstar Danny Beard, Livin' Joy, Sweet Female Attitude and The Voice's Kirby take to the stage.

The festival will be preceded by a colourful walking parade through the city centre - starting at St Peter's Street at 11am.

The procession will snake its way through the streets of Derby, terminating at Curzon Street ahead of the main event.

For more information, search for Derbyshire LGBT+ Pride on Facebook.

Britain's Got Talent comedian set to star at Shrewsbury gay night

Britain's Got Talent runner-up Robert White - the self-described 'only gay, aspergic, quarter-Welsh comic on the British comedy circuit' - will this autumn headline Shrewsbury's only dedicated gay night.

Known for wearing a tank-top whilst on stage, the musical comedian has previously appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe, earning a top-ten place in the festival's 'funniest joke' competition.

Robert came runner-up in Britain's Got Talent 2018, losing out to fellow comedian Lost Voice Guy (Lee Ridley).

He performs in Shrewsbury at Havana Republic's Fabulous Mondays gay night on 8 October. Birmingham drag legend Miss Penny hosts the show.

Proposal for Pride flag reboot

Daniel Quasar, a digital designer based in the US, wants to see a more inclusive Pride flag, so he's added five colours in triangular format to represent gay people of colour and the transgender community.

Daniel has called the new design Progress: A Pride Flag Reboot, and currently has a Kickstarter campaign for an initial production of 500 flags.

Speaking about his design, Daniel says: "When the Pride flag was recreated last year to include both black/brown stripes, as well as the trans stripes included this year, I wanted to see if there could be more emphasis in the design of the flag, to give it more meaning.

"The initial idea was important because I felt like I could bring something to the table when it came to the way the flag was shifting within the community. I'm a designer and I wanted to make a change where I saw an opportunity to do so - and a positive change too, in my mind at least."

Local Life Story

Name: Dan Browne

Occupation: Chair of Warwickshire Pride

Place of birth: Leamington Spa

Star sign: Virgo

Age: 33

About Dan

Where did you grow up?

Leamington Spa. It's my home town and I love where I come from.

Single or attached?

I'm happily attached.

What makes you happy?

The simple things in life. Long walks in the countryside, seeing friends and a cold glass of prosecco on a Friday evening.

What makes you sad?

People who don't accept others for who they are. We're all valid, and it's okay to be different.

What makes you angry?

I try not to do anger, but injustice makes me angry.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I spent so many years wanting to change pretty much everything about myself that now I wouldn't change a thing. Self-acceptance is so important..

What's been the most embarrassing thing you've done in your life?

There are far too many things I could mention, but I'm not sure this is the place for it. My mother might read it!

Would you consider getting married in the future?

Absolutely. It's great that we now have the option to get married.

Coming out

When did you first know you were gay?

When I was five years old I knew I wanted to marry a man when I grew up. I didn't know what gay was at that time, but I knew that I wasn't like everyone else.

When did you come out?

At 15. Then again at 16, 17 and 18. Then probably every year since then. Coming out never ends, really. When you start a new job or meet someone new, you end up coming out to them. It's not necessarily standing on a soap box to declare my gayness, but there's always a coming out in some form.

What was school like for you as a gay teenager?

School was awful. I hated it. But I've since worked with the school I went to and feel pleased that it's now a much better place for LGBT+ students than when I attended.

Who was the first person you told you were gay?

My mate, Jamie. He said, "That's okay, but I'm not". He was fine with it. Fortunately, most people have been.

What would you say to a youngster trying to come to terms with their own sexuality?

I would advise them to speak to someone they can trust. Don't be afraid of who you are, because it's completely natural. And although it's a cliche, things do get better.

Warwickshire Pride

How many years has Warwickshire Pride been running for?

It's now in its sixth year and going from strength to strength. I'm proud of how far it's come.

What have you got in store for Warwickshire Pride visitors this year?

We're planning our biggest, best and most diverse festival. We're really big on inclusion and celebrating all LGBT+ people. So this year we're having a trans zone again, plus a bi zone and a women's tent. We're highlighting LGBT+ people with disabilities and BME LGBT+ people, too. Prides need to be about more than white gay men, and every year we're striving to do more to

Quickfire

Who's your favourite film actor?

Tom Hanks. Or Tom Hardy. But only for shallow reasons.

What's your favourite book?

A book I have about Star Trek.

Half empty or half full?

Neither. The glass is always full.

What's your favourite food?

Christmas dinner.

And how about your favourite drink?

Prosecco.

Madonna or Lady Gaga?

Madonna is the only answer.

If you could take a selfie with one person, alive or dead, who would it be?

George Michael. Or my boyfriend because he'll want to know why if I don't say him.

be fully inclusive and welcoming to all. We're also having a Big Rainbow Bake Off. Any excuse to eat cake!

What's the biggest challenge you face in organising Warwickshire Pride?

Funding is always a struggle. It's a sad fact that the bigger Prides are getting bigger and receiving more support each year, while the smaller Prides are left to struggle. That's why so many are cancelling or postponing for a year. Being able to afford to put on the festival is always the biggest challenge.

How rewarding do you find contributing to Warwickshire Pride?

Organising Warwickshire Pride is an incredibly rewarding experience. I founded the charity and organised the first three festivals completely by myself. It was tough and nearly broke me on several occasions, but seeing it all come together on the day and hearing from people whose lives have been improved by attending Pride makes it all worthwhile.

Where would you like to see Warwickshire Pride in five years' time?

Still running! I hope that it will stick with its community-focused, grass-roots ethos and be known as a nice little festival to attend. We're getting there.

Your Career

Outside of Pride, what do you do for a living?

I'm a hypnotherapist. I run my clinic in Leamington Spa and absolutely love what I do.

When you were younger, what did you want to be?

James Bond. Then I wanted to be Nigel Mansell. I thought I'd settled on a career as a policeman, but life is full of twists and turns that lead you to where you are now. Part of me would still like to be James Bond.

What was your first job after leaving school?

I worked in a clothes shop. I quite enjoyed it.

We've all got a dream job - what's yours?

I think I'm doing it.

Gay scene

How long have you been frequenting the Midlands gay scene?

Fifteen years.

What's been your fondest memory of the scene?

Some of the friends I've made, and the wonderful, interesting people I've met over the years.

Who's your favourite cabaret act?

I have a soft spot for Miss Penny. I also adore Sassi Afrika and Asifa Lahore.

Who's your favourite person on the scene?

Anyone who's friendly.

What do you most enjoy about the scene?

The larger-than-life characters who shine bright.

What have you noticed about the way the scene's changed over the years?

It's much more mainstream, in that many non-LGBT+ people visit the scene. I don't think that's a bad thing, providing they're respectful towards LGBT+ people and our culture.

How would you change the scene?

I'd send all the cliques to Room 101.

Time out

Where do you like to go on a night out?

Anywhere as long as the company is good.

What do you do to relax?

Put my scruffy clothes on, curl up on the sofa and watch TV.

What do you enjoy on telly?

I like EastEnders a lot more than I should. Anything sci-fi or horror is good, too.

What was the last track or album you bought or downloaded?

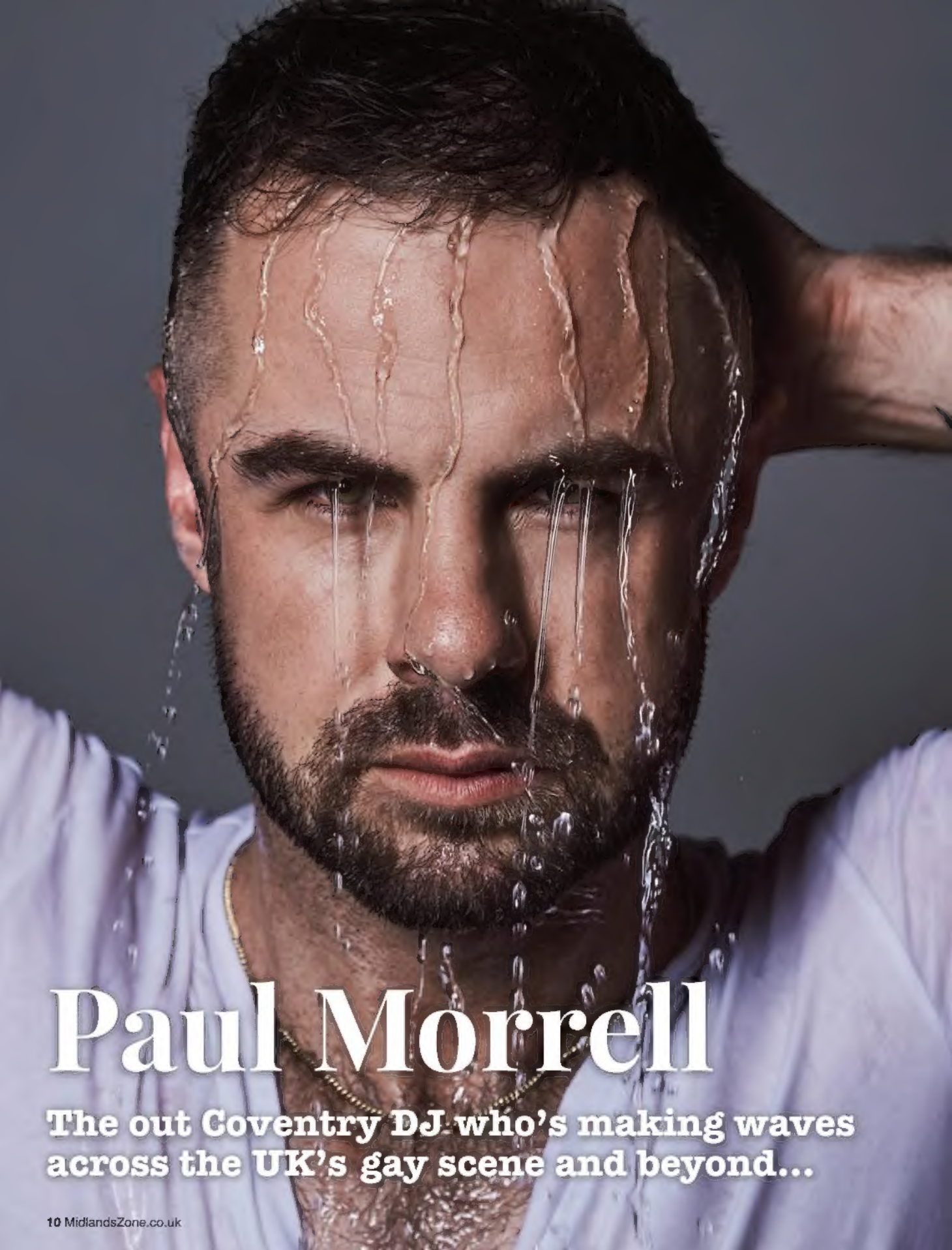
The latest Sassi Afrika album is pretty good. That's probably the last one I bought. Either that or Kelela's album. She's a great artist. More people should know about her.

Which one website do you spend the most time on?

I search for things on Google far too much.

What type of holiday do you prefer?

Somewhere I can explore. I like going abroad, but it needs to be somewhere that I can explore, learn a bit of the language and meet local people. I couldn't cope with a package holiday. The Lake District is pretty special. We're lucky to have lots of beautiful holiday destinations in the UK.



Paul Morrell

The out Coventry DJ who's making waves across the UK's gay scene and beyond...

Twenty-three years after kickstarting his career, Paul Morrell is now one of the Midlands' most renowned DJs, with residencies at both XXL in Birmingham and London and at Ministry of Sound. Here, he talks about his career, DJing on the gay scene, his remixes and more...

When did you first begin DJing, Paul?

I started in 1995 as a mobile DJ, working mainly at parties for friends. However, my interest in dance music and DJing started way before that. I've always had a keen interest in house music - it was the cool alternative to the Brit Pop/Spice Girls stuff that was in the charts at the time - and from a very young age, I'd collected house music records. The first records I bought were Pump Up The Jam by Technotronic and Ride On Time by Black Box in 1989 They really set out the style of music that I'd end up playing, as they're two of the first major house records to cross over into the mainstream top-40. Initially, I didn't earn very much money at all as a DJ. I was simply playing at house parties for the love of DJing and to gain experience. The very early parties I did, I may have been paid £50, which was much better than the salary I was earning at my Saturday job, as I was still at school. This led me to believe that DJing was a viable career path, so I started pursuing it seriously after leaving school. I do think those early gigs were invaluable, however, as they gave me the opportunity to learn how to work a crowd, mix under pressure and test out new tracks. Looking back, some of my first gigs were a huge learning curve, with lots of things going wrong, or not perfectly. I think every good DJ needs to have experienced this, in order to improve and hone their craft.

What are your earliest memories of being a DJ?

When I first started, it was totally different to today, predominantly due to the fact that I had to lug around three huge boxes of weighty vinyl, which also cost an absolute fortune. DJs in 2018 simply hear a new tune on the radio or in a club that they like, Shazam it, download it and turn up with a USB full of new music and a pair of headphones. In 1995, it was very different, and DJs would often spend hours on a Saturday in a record shop compiling sets from the latest vinyl releases for a set that evening. Ten vinyl would cost anything up to £100, whereas 10mp3s cost £7 Music has become far more accessible to DJs in that sense. Also, you would often have to wait for weeks for a track to be pressed on vinyl before you could play it out, unless you were lucky enough to have been mailed it by the record company. A great example of this was Music Sounds Better With You by Stardust, which Pete Tong had been championing on Radio One for weeks - but nobody could get a copy. This would never happen now, as people would just illegally rip the record from the internet and incorporate it within their sets.

What type of music do you predominantly play?

I play a variety of different genres of electronic music, and don't particularly pigeonhole myself into one specific style That said, I've always leaned more towards tougher-sounding music, as I feel it has a great energy in clubs, and my personal preference is EDM. When I initially began DJing, my sets consisted of a variety of genres, and most DJs played all types of music. A great example of this is Jeremy Healy, who is one of the DJs I truly admire. Jeremy often drops random tracks into his sets, which makes a crowd stop and go, 'What the hell?!' I've heard him play Twist & Shout by The Beatles in the middle of an electro house set. It's only in more recent years that DJs have been under pressure to pledge their allegiance to one specific genre - which is kinda sad, really, as it limits creativity. I have a love for all music, so if I have a trance record that I love from the 1990s or a disco record from the 1970s and it's appropriate to the crowd I'm playing to, I'll find a way of including it.

What was your first 'big' gig?

My first major gig outside of my home town was supporting Paul Oakenfold at London's Ministry of Sound in 2008. This was also the very first time I'd played at Ministry of Sound. It was an extremely special experience - at the time, Oakenfold was one of the biggest DJs in the world. I've since gone on to support him several times, and have also released music on his Perfecto label. I just remember thinking that I'd really achieved something, as Oakenfold and Ministry are two major players in international house music culture. It was the DJing equivalent of playing at Wembley as a footballer.

Who's the biggest DJ you've been on a line-up with?

It's really subjective, as a DJ who's 'big' at the moment can be completely forgotten a year or so later. A DJ that I always love supporting is Boy George. He's an international fashion & music icon and such a lovely guy to work with. He also provided the vocals on my track, Tall & Handsome, last year, which was a huge honour for me. I would say he's probably the most internationally famous celebrity I've worked with frequently. I've also worked with huge trance and EDM artists such as Martin Garrix, Tiesto, Paul Van Dyk, Armin Van Buuren, Hardwell etc. I suppose to the average 18 year-old reader of this magazine, Martin Garrix is far more famous than Boy George. However, I wasn't really star-struck by any of those guys when I first met them; not in the same way I was with George

Do any other DJs give you inspiration for your sets?

As I already mentioned, I was hugely inspired by some of the legendary British house music DJs of the 1990s, such as Danny Rampling and Jeremy Healy, but I constantly gain inspiration from new people. A more contemporary artist I really admire is Kryder. I absolutely love his recent production with Erick Morillo entitled Waves. It's been a firm favourite in my sets for several months now. I also love Martin Solveig as a producer and a DJ, as his sets are always fun and quirky. He's had a great career, and his productions are always really amazing floor-fillers. There's also a new breed of young DJs, such as Craig Knight, James Bluck and Nathan C, who're producing some great music, too. Avicii was also a more recent inspiration, and it was a huge loss to the EDM community when he passed away earlier this year.

Who would you like to DJ alongside?

To be perfectly honest, I've worked with almost every DJ that I've ever wanted to, so there aren't that many left. I suppose the obvious one who would be most suited to my genre of music, and

who I still haven't met, is Calvin Harris. He's had an astonishing career and completely revolutionised commercial dance music, opening it up to a new generation. I know that some people don't like his music, but I believe what he's done for the EDM scene and youth culture as a whole is phenomenal.

What's been your favourite gig to DJ at?

So far, one of the biggest gigs I've performed at is the Weekend Festival in Helsinki, Finland. The line-up basically consisted of a who's-who of EDM. I was on the same line-up as Swedish House Maffia, Steve Aoki, Garrix, Tiesto, Marshmallow, Don Diablo etc. The festival is attended by approximately 30,000 people, and is one of the biggest in that area of Europe. That said, I've also had an amazing time performing for Birmingham Pride over the past few years. The atmosphere is always fantastic, both whilst playing and backstage. My early gigs in Coventry at my own Classique events were also extremely memorable, and I had a great time playing in the tiny venues there back in the early 2000s.

Where would you most like to DJ?

I intend to do a lot more overseas performances over the next few years, and am very much looking forward to performing at Matinee's Circuit festival in Barcelona later this month. I'm also absolutely thrilled to have been added to Gatecrasher's line-up for their event in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral. Obviously, being my home city, this venue being hugely iconic, and with Coventry having been selected as 2021 UK City of Culture, it's fantastic to be back playing in my home town once again. Gatecrasher have pulled out all the stops with a huge line-up of UK DJ talent, including Judge Jules and Seb Fontaine, and I'll be performing alongside an orchestra and live vocalists at the event.

You DJ at XXL in both London and Birmingham. What makes XXL so special?

XXL is unlike any other club in the UK. It's one of the most important gay clubbing events for men, and hugely inclusive of every type of guy on the scene. Until I joined XXL, I'd predominantly only DJed on the straight scene, so initially found it to be a real eye-opener. The London event in particular is full to capacity virtually every week, and the clubbers themselves are a loyal group of guys who come to the event for an attitude-free night and to enjoy the music. I think one of the main things that makes XXL so special is the fact that the team itself is like a big family. Everyone works together to promote a great brand and provide a brilliant experience for people to enjoy It really is a hugely unique clubbing event. I would encourage any guys who haven't been to XXL before to come along and see for themselves

There's a special 30 Years of Club Classics event coming to Birmingham's XXL. Are you excited about it?

Yes, extremely. The fact that XXL is such a mixed and diverse club age-wise means that the event should literally have something for everyone. There's an abundance of great records within all of the genres of dance music over the last 30 years, and this event will really give me the opportunity to dig out some lost gems and take everyone on a real nostalgia trip. I'll be going right back to the beginnings of UK house music and

selecting tracks from 1989 onwards, slowly bringing the night up to date with more recent classics
We will also be asking the XXL clubbers to select their own club classics via the XXL Birmingham Facebook page, suggesting the tracks they'd like to hear me play We're doing a similar event at the start of August in London, where I'll be joined on the decks by legendary producer/remixer KKlass and the other resident DJ, Alex Logan.

You also DJ regularly at Ministry of Sound. How does the straight scene differ from the gay one?

They're completely different. Ministry of Sound is a lot younger; the crowd is predominately 18 to 24. XXL is a much more mature and far more discerning crowd. The other obvious difference between the two is that XXL is a men-only club; therefore the dynamic of the two is extremely different, as 50% of the clubbers in MoS are women.

You've worked with a lot of artists on remixes and original tracks. Who's been your favourite?

They're all great for different reasons, and all bring something unique and special to the table. I loved working with Mutya Buena, as she's such an immense talent with a fantastic voice and great image. We've actually been in contact recently about doing another collaboration, which we've already written. It's just a case of pinning her down to a date in the studio now, as she's always so busy. That said, it's also been great working with new artists such as Indigo Marshall and Vicky Jackson, both of whom are extremely talented and have amazing vocals. As I previously mentioned, it was also a huge honour that Boy George agreed to provide a vocal for me on my track, Tall & Handsome, last year.

You've recently been working on a lot of projects and remixes. Tell us a little about them...

The main forthcoming remix is of Troye Sivan s single, Bloom, which I'm hoping will be released late summer. I also have two new singles completed, one with Laura White entitled No Ordinary Love, and one featuring Amanda Wilson called Up In Flames. These are both big vocal piano house records and will hopefully achieve some success. The Laura White track in particular is extremely exciting, and I absolutely love her vocals on it.

Finally, I have a forthcoming remix for a new artist called Ava Max, which will be released at the end of the summer.

What have you got coming up in the pipeline?

I'm absolutely thrilled to be returning on Bank Holiday Sunday, August the 26th, to one of the venues where I started my career. The Yard in Coventry (formerly The Glasshouse) is an extremely intimate 200-capacity venue that I first began promoting in somewhere around 15 years ago. This will be the first club gig I've played in Coventry for a number of years. The venue is extremely important to me, as it's the place where I first worked with artists including Tall Paul, Sonique, Dave Pearce etc. It will always have a special place in my heart. Although it's far smaller than the venues I now play in, I'm hoping that it will give some of the people who used to come along when I played regularly in Coventry the opportunity to do so again.

Locally, you can catch Paul Morrell at XXL at The Core in Birmingham every last Friday of the month.

Catch up with all of Paul's latest news, events and music releases at facebook.com/paul.morrell.5

SUMMER OF PRIDE

A guide to forthcoming LGBT festivals in the Midlands...

Raise your rainbow at Warwickshire Pride

Saturday 18 August - Pump Room Gardens, Leamington Spa
warwickshirepride.co.uk

The good people of Warwickshire are eagerly awaiting the return of one of the region's best Pride events - and this year, it's going to be an even cheekier affair!

That's right, the Raise Your Rainbow-themed event (you're encouraged to wear bright clothes and fly a rainbow flag) features the amazingly cheesy Cheeky Girls as its headline act, performing live on the main stage!

Other participants include Feryl, Lauren Harries, Bekah and Asifa Lahore. And as usual, the event also features a trans area, women's tent, fairground, family area and plenty more!

Walsall Pride returns...

Saturday 25 August - Gallery Square
walsallpride.org

Each year, Walsall Pride gets bigger, better and even more popular - and fingers crossed 2018 proves no exception!

Taking place as usual at Gallery Square in the centre of town, the festival features a host of live acts on the main stage, plus a cabaret stage at The Red Lion and a huge afterparty at The Lion Bar & Club

Whilst live acts for the event are yet to be announced, we're sure it's going to be a fun-filled day for the whole family to enjoy.

Check out the website for all the latest info!

Telford Pride gets a new date!

Saturday 15 September - Hartshill Park, Oakengates
telfordpride.co.uk

After a few years without an LGBT festival in and around Telford town centre, 2018 sees the welcome return of Telford Pride - now on the rescheduled date of Saturday 15 September

Hosted at Hartshill Park, the festival is organised by the Telford LGBT+ Group, and is the town's first community-led LGBT event.

Get up-to-date information at telfordpride.co.uk

THE PARADE ASSEMBLE AT 11AM ON ST PETERS CHURCHARD

SAT 8 SEPT

DERBYSHIRE LGBT+ Pride

PRIDE KICKS OFF AT 12PM ON CURZON STREET

MAIN STAGE HOSTED BY INTERNATIONAL STAR

AND

AND

TRUDY KNIGHT AND MISS DAVINA, MIZZ PINK, MILESTONE ROAD, STUDIO STORM FITNESS, MOSS ALEXANDER, PETE MARTINE ULTIMATE DEMI LOVATO

DJ ADZ , DJ VAUN AND DJ WILL

THE OFFICIAL AFTER PARTY
FEATURING SMASHBY AND DJ VAUN
THE CROWN INN, CURZON SREET 10PM - 3AM

ATLANTA

Derbyshire LGBT+
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*

The Crown Inn
Curzon St, Derby

www.derbyshirepride.co.uk

Warwickshire Pride 2018

Saturday 18th August

11.00am - 5.00pm

The Pump Room Gardens, Leamington Spa

Market stalls . Live performances . Trans area . Women's tent
Fairground . Family area . Food stalls . Bar . And much more

2018 theme: RAISE YOUR RAINBOW. Wear colourful clothes, fly your rainbow flags, come to Pride and be proud of who you are

Faryl

Cheeky Girls

Lauren Harries . Bekah

Asifa Lahore . Letitia George

Taylor-Louise . Paul Andreas . Sassi Afrika

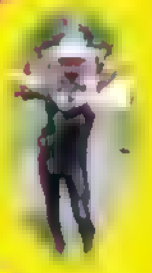
Duck Thieves . Kian Taylor-Jackson . Blu Ernest

Including The Big Rainbow Bake Off

FREE ENTRY

All people welcome

www.warwickshirepride.co.uk



Proudly supported by

Registered charity number: 1162449

UK Diary Dates

AUGUST

Bicon Convention
Thursday 2 - Sunday 5 August
Leeds Beckett University
2018.bicon.org.uk

Brighton Pride SOLD OUT!
Friday 3 - Sunday 5 August
Preston Park
brighton-pride.org

Leeds Pride
Sunday 5 August
Lower Briggate
leedspride.com

Chester Pride
Saturday 11 August
Castle Square
chesterpride.co.uk

Warwickshire Pride
Saturday 18 August
Pump Room Gardens
warwickshirepride.co.uk

Manchester Pride
Friday 24 - Sun 27 August
Manchester
manchesterpride.com

[illegible]
Saturday 25 August
Victoria Gardens, Truro
cornwallpride.org

Walsall Pride
Saturday 25 August
Gallery Square
facebook.com/walsallprideofficial

SEPTEMBER

Leicester Pride
Saturday 1 September
Victoria Park
leicesterpride.com

Telford Pride
Saturday 15 September
Hartshill Park, Oakengates
telfordpride.co.uk

Pixie Lott, Brighton Pride

Gloucestershire Pride
Saturday 8 September
Gloucester Park
prideinglos.org.uk

Worcester Pride
Saturday 8 September
Worcester Common
worcesterpride.org

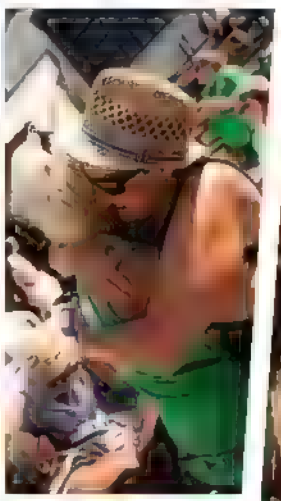
Cumbria Pride
Saturday 29 September
Carlisle City Centre
cumbriapride.org

L Fest: A weekend of ladies, laughter and love!

Another year, and another L Fest has been and gone! But what a success it was!

The ever-popular festival, which sold out weeks and weeks in advance, ventured out of the Midlands for the first time this year, instead taking place on the Welsh coast in a glorious summer heatwave!

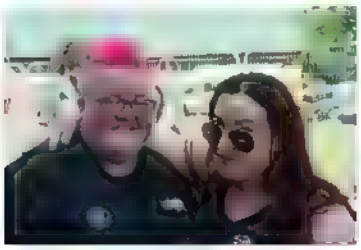
And for the hundreds of girls who got together at the event, we're imagining it might well have been one of the best weekends of their lives!



Loud and proud at Chesterfield Pride

The crowds turned out for yet another successful Chesterfield Pride last month.

With great weather, the town's LGBT community came out in force to show just how loud and proud they can be! Congratulations to everyone involved - roll on 2019!



I'M STOPPING HIV.

Find out all the ways to stop HIV

StartsWithMe.org.uk

IT STARTS WITH ME

Terrence Higgins Trust

Produced by Terrence Higgins Trust for HIV PREVENTION ENGLAND.

Terrence Higgins Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (reg no. 288527) and in Scotland (SC039986). Company reg no. 1778149

Well Woman Sexual Health Clinic

Exclusively for Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Women

Runs on the 1st Wednesday of each month from 4pm–7pm

Offering a range of services including testing and treatment for STI's and cervical cytology (smear testing).

Providing a safe, confidential and culturally competent service which makes no assumptions about your sex life.

www.blgbt.org/sexual-health

Tel: 0121 643 0821

Birmingham LGBT

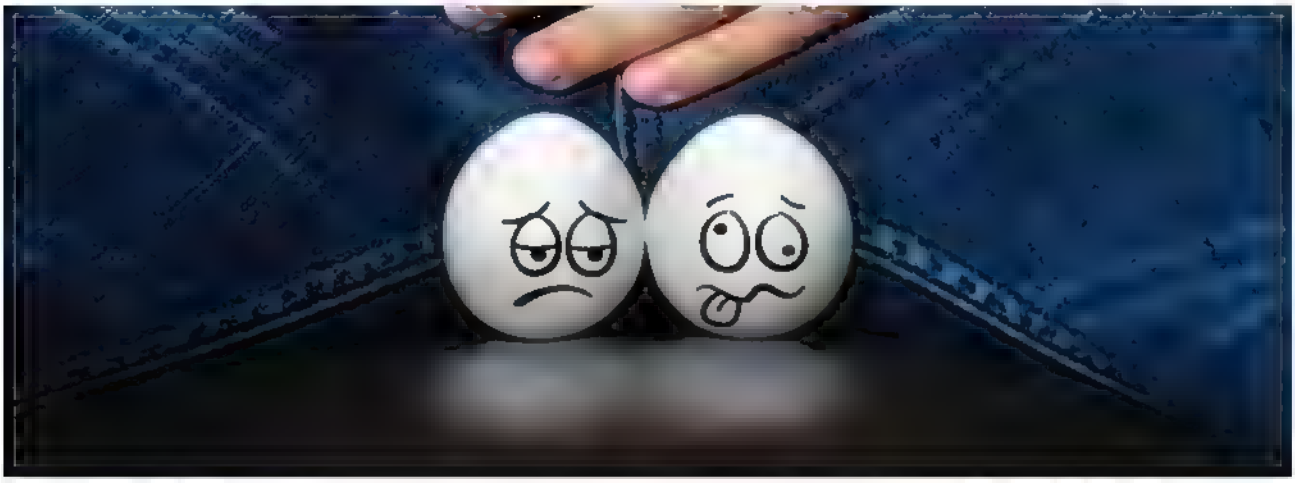
Supported by umbrella

Get tested from home for STIs including HIV.
Order your free kit now: umbrellahealth.co.uk/testing

The Clap Trap!

All you need to know about gonorrhoea...

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria called Neisseria gonorrhoeae or gonococcus. It used to be known as "the clap". We've gathered a selection of gonorrhoea-based facts and important information about the infection; so have a read and boost your sexual health IQ!



Gonorrhoea is the most common STI amongst men who have sex with men

Gonorrhoea made up 43% of the STIs diagnosed in men who have sex with men in 2017. This equated to 21,346 positive diagnoses amongst men who have sex with men in England. Just in case you were wondering, chlamydia came in second with 31%

Rates of gonorrhoea are increasing in the UK

There were 44,676 diagnoses of gonorrhoea reported in 2017 which is a 22% increase when compared to statistics from 2016. Since 2008, gonorrhoea cases have shot up from 14,985 to 44,676

A common symptom in men is an unusual discharge from the tip of the penis

Look out for an unusual discharge from the tip of the penis, which may be white, yellow or green, as this is a common symptom of gonorrhoea in men. Other symptoms include a burning sensation when peeing and inflammation (swelling) of the foreskin. You may experience pain or tenderness in the testicles, although this is rare.

About 1 in 10 infected men don't experience any obvious symptoms though, so even if you've not noticed any symptoms, it's worth getting a check-up if you've changed sexual partners recently

Gonorrhoea is pretty easy to treat

Most cases of gonorrhoea are easy to treat; a quick antibiotic injection (usually in the buttocks or thigh) followed by 1 antibiotic tablet. It's sometimes possible to have another antibiotic tablet instead of an injection, if you prefer. Although it's usually easy to treat, there are strains of the infection out there which are trickier, which brings us nicely onto our next point...

Gonorrhoea is getting most resistant to antibiotics

You may have heard about 'super gonorrhoea' in the news. Sounding like the world's worst superhero, 'super gonorrhoea' is a strain of gonorrhoea which cannot be cured with the antibiotics usually used to treat gonorrhoea (which is azithromycin and ceftriaxone in case you were wondering). Earlier this year a man was diagnosed with the world's worst 'super gonorrhoea' and Dr Gwenda Hughes, from Public Health England, said: "This is the first time a case has displayed such high-level resistance to both of these drugs and to most other commonly used antibiotics."

Gonorrhoea can be spread by sharing sex toys too

Like most bacterial STIs, gonorrhoea can be spread by sharing vibrators or other sex toys if they've not been washed or covered with a new condom between partners. Keep things clean by making sure sex toys are washed thoroughly, or if you're in the middle of something, just pop a new condom on before using it on someone else.

Condoms are your best defence against gonorrhoea

As with all STIs, condoms are the best way to protect yourself from gonorrhoea. Although PrEP is great at preventing HIV transmission, it doesn't protect against gonorrhoea (or any other STIs) so make sure you're still using condoms, even if you are on PrEP

For more information or to get tested, get in touch with GayLife via North Staffordshire via lgbtstoke.co.uk

SUMMER LOVIN'

SUN, SEA, SEX & STIs

Summer is a time of year when having unprotected sex becomes a bit more likely. Hot weather, holidays with friends, a lot of alcohol and exciting new experiences are all factors which can lead to a spike in STIs. But don't let having fun in the sun be an excuse for not taking precautions and getting properly checked out. To find out more about STIs, we spoke to the team at the STI Clinic.

SIGNS YOU MIGHT HAVE AN STI

1. Pain in testicles

Any kind of pain is usually a sign that there's a problem in the body. If you experience pain in your testicles, it could be a symptom of either gonorrhea or chlamydia. So if you notice this, it's best to get a checkup asap. You might experience this pain when urinating or during sex, or it might just be present throughout the day

2. Penis discharge

Discharge from the tip of the penis can be a symptom of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or urethritis. If you notice any discharge - either cloudy, white, yellow or green - it's usually a sign that something isn't right. If you experience any unusual discharge, go to the doctor and get checked out as soon as possible

3. Pain while urinating

If you experience a burning sensation whilst urinating, or any pain at all, it might be a sign of an STI, including chlamydia or urethritis. If you notice this, book an appointment to rule out any possible infections.

4. No symptoms at all

Many STIs don't display their symptoms for a long time. Some STIs take months or even years to become evident. So just because you don't have any symptoms, it doesn't mean that you're not infected.

Chlamydia has been termed 'the silent epidemic' because of how overwhelmingly prevalent it is, but without any obvious symptoms. Around 70% of women and 50% of men infected with the disease have no symptoms at all.

Around five percent of men have no symptoms at all when they're infected with gonorrhea, while a person with HIV often doesn't show any symptoms for years. Sometimes they don't ever develop any visible signs

GETTING TESTED

If you think that there's a chance you're infected with an STI, it's best to get tested as soon as possible. Don't wait for symptoms to appear, because they might never do so.

Most STIs can be tested for via a urine sample or a urethral swab in a doctor's surgery or at a local GUM clinic. Some can be tested via home kits.

GETTING TREATED

If you have an STI, don't panic - most can be completely cured or controlled with medical attention.

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is treated with a course of antibiotics. If you have a partner, you should both be treated with antibiotics simultaneously, and refrain from having sex during your course of treatment (even with a condom.)

If you've been infected with chlamydia numerous times, you're much more likely to suffer from long term complications. If you contract chlamydia, make sure you take proper precautions not to get it again. The best way to do this is by using condoms. However, doing so isn't 100% effective, so make sure you're regularly screened as well.

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea has now developed a resistance to certain antibiotics which were first used to treat it. There are now only a few antibiotics left that are still effective in treating gonorrhea, with an intra-muscular injection being the most common treatment. Gonorrhea symptoms usually take around two to three days to disappear after treatment. Because of known drug resistance, make sure you're tested again two weeks after treatment, and avoid sex for at least a week afterwards.

It's never been easier to get tested for STIs. If you're in any doubt, get tested and rule out any possible diseases. The sooner an STI is caught, the easier it is to treat.

The above advice was given by Dr Elizabeth Kershaw-Yates, a GP and one of the medical team at the STI Clinic: thesticlinic.com

TRANZ TALKZ

Prominent queer artist Travis Alabanza is heading to Coventry's Belgrade Theatre for Tranz Talkz, a discussion event that will reflect on and document experiences of queer and transphobic public harassment. Here, Travis talks to Midlands Zone about the idea behind the evening and the future of trans equality...

You describe yourself as a performer, writer and theatre maker, Travis. When did you discover performance was something you were good at?

For me, I've been performing from a young age, whether that means I've been performing gender or trying to figure out on the streets how to perform to the vibe The first time I was on a stage was when I was eight, and people started realising that maybe I could do something on stage and people would listen. I like performing because I think the brackets are so open; you're constantly performing in lots of different ways. Definitely before my teens, I realised the stage was where people would listen to me.

Where do you get your inspiration from?

From my daily experiences of just existing, of being a trans person in the world, being surrounded by other trans people, watching the things we deal with. I think that's what inspires me; to bring that voice to the stage and let people know what it's really like to live with us and as us Obviously, there's so much press and media surrounding trans people at the moment. I think my inspiration is to bring some honesty to the conversation.

What's your favourite piece that you've written or performed over the years?

I've really, really loved being able to tour recently with my chapbook, Before I Step Outside (You Love Me). We went to places I never thought I would go, and I also did a tour of the States. Just seeing that this piece of work that I wrote on public transport has been taken to so many different parts of the world and connected with so many people has really inspired me

You've performed in some notable venues - which has been your favourite?

I always think it's really special when I get to go back home to Bristol, where I grew up, to perform in the Arnolfini. Growing up, I didn't really have access to art places, as I lived on a council estate outside the city. Going back to the Arnolfini and headlining an event there was really special to me; I loved it!

How do you use your art to express your experiences of being black and trans?

My shows are very uncensored, honest and real. For me, the best way of expressing it is without a filter It comes without the media twisting it; often it comes from honesty, diary entries and direct experiences. That's the best way to express it because we don't have a middle person. As trans people we're constantly talked for and talked about. I think I use my art to say, 'No, we can talk for ourselves'

How would you describe your performances?

They cross forms. Often I'm working with sound and soundscapes, poetry and theatre. I would say they're confrontational, and whether you love them or hate them, there's always a strong emotion in them.

What's your personal trans journey?

I knew from a young age that the way gender was being forced on me wasn't working. I felt uncomfortable with the way I was being forced to perform masculinity and manhood. I would say my journey is still happening. Whether we're trans/cis or whatever we want to call ourselves, we're all constantly coming out and reinventing parts of ourselves. I feel that my journey is still happening; it just happens to be happening in front of a lot of people!

To you, what is gender?

I would say gender is a construct that was created to order. We saw these people and we created these two things that have these ideas and rules beside them. I feel like gender is so much more expansive than what we're told to be. Some people would say there is only male and female. I guess that what my work is trying to say is that each person's gender is unique. There are as many genders as there are people We are constantly finding ways to experiment with our genders.

You're also an activist. How important is activism to you?

I try not to see a separation. I think there are so many types of activism in the world. I would never kid myself that I'm doing some of the groundwork at the grass roots. Not like incredible friends such as Action For Trans Help or LGBT Support The Migrants are doing. I feel like my art and activism has no split. The voices and thoughts I talk about on stage are exactly what I talk about on the streets. My art is my activism.

You're heading to Coventry's Belgrade Theatre with your free event, Tranz Talkz. You'll be using the event as a way to 'reflect and document experiences of queer and transphobic public harassment'. What made you want to do this show?

It's actually a preliminary for a show I'm doing called Burgerz. Tranz Talkz is less of a performance and more of an invitation to dine with me and to talk about the issues surrounding being trans. I wasn't seeing enough space for us just to talk, so I wanted to create a space where trans people specifically could come and talk in archive about the harassment and the violence they experience, as well as the joys, of course. I realised there wasn't an archive existing in the UK talking about the more menial aspects of being trans - such as what it's like being trans at work, or being trans on the streets. I wanted to create this pre-show to generate some of that data.

Have you been subjected to transphobic harassment yourself?

Yes - I mean, just today! Going outside and being non-gender-conforming means I'm constantly being harassed.

What still needs to be done in terms of trans equality?

People need to listen to trans people, believe them when they're talking about the experiences they're having and see their needs as urgent. Right now, we're facing one-third of trans people being dismissed from work for being trans, 60 percent of trans people having experienced physical or emotional abuse, and high numbers of trans people being homeless.

Can you see a brighter future ahead?

I think it will take time, but I'm seeing more of a shift towards us being able to have a voice, which is exciting!

And how do you feel the trans community are welcomed by the rest of the LGBTQ+ community?

It's really conflicting. I found a lot of my family and friends in the LGBT community, but then, as we saw in the recent Pride In London march, there's a small group of people within the LGB community who're really damaging in trans-acceptance. I think people are confused about what it means to be trans and what trans people are fighting for. There's conflict there, and I think that's what sometimes is hard about being trans.

What's coming up for Travis in the future?

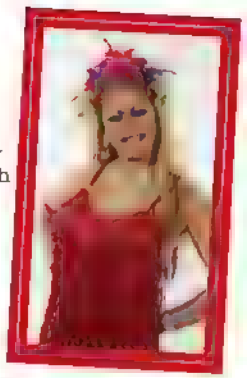
Hopefully a little break! But before that, I've got my new show, Burgerz, coming out in October with Hackney Showroom Theatre. I'm really excited about launching that!

Trans Talkz is a free event taking place at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, on Thursday 20 September.
Visit belgrade.co.uk for more information and to book tickets.

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 5 August

Marty Smith heads to Coventry venue The Yard!



Alongside her Nightingale Club residency, Birmingham's award-winning drag queen Marty Smith will be performing at another fantastic Midlands venue this month.

That's right! Head over to Coventry's The Yard for a slice of Marty's party - a sure fire way to enjoy a great night!

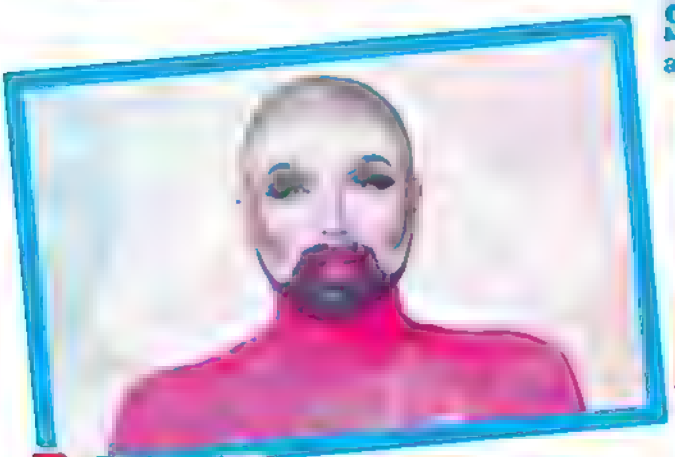
Friday 3 August - The Yard, Coventry

Sum Ting Wong at The Village Inn

Coming to Birmingham's The Village Inn to begin a month of cabaret is Drag Idol winner, Sum Ting Wong!

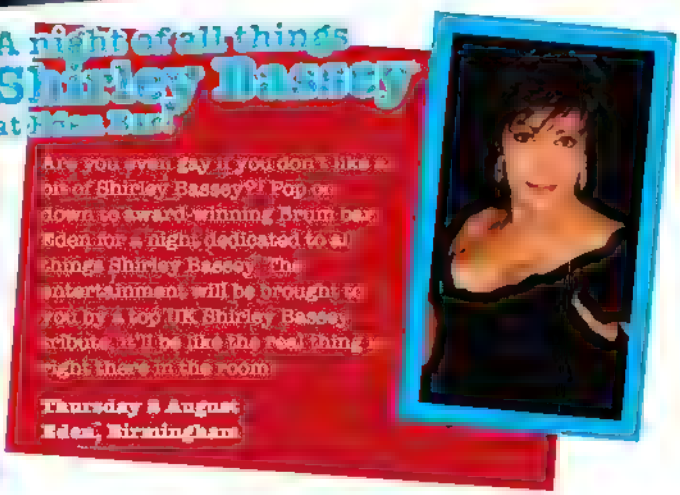
It's not the first time the popular drag star has performed at the venue, but if you haven't managed to catch her yet, we suggest you do!

Friday 3 August - The Village Inn, Birmingham



Danny Beard returns to Brum's Eden Bar

Kickstarting a month of entertainment at Birmingham's Eden Bar is the one and only Danny Beard who'll appear in the Marquee on Saturday 4 August. The Britain's Got Talent star will be delighting the crowd with her winning blend of great vocals and fabulous comedy. The perfect start to your weekend of partying! **Saturday 4 August - Eden, Birmingham**



Are you even gay if you don't like a bit of Shirley Bassey?! Pop on down to award-winning Brum bar Eden for a night dedicated to all things Shirley Bassey. The entertainment will be brought to you by a top UK Shirley Bassey tribute, it'll be like the real thing right there in the room!

Thursday 9 August
Eden, Birmingham

It was acceptable in the '80s!

Yearning for a night of '80s hits to party along to? Then look no further than The Loft in Birmingham on the first Saturday of every month, where DJ Simon Baker will be spinning the tracks from years gone by!

Every first Saturday of the month - The Loft, Birmingham

BOOK ONLINE
www.thsh.co.uk
Box office
0121 780 3333

THSH
TOWN HALL BIRMINGHAM
SYMPHONY HALL BIRMINGHAM

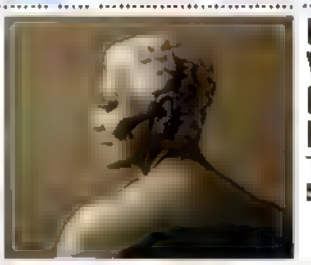
TEXAS + IMELDA MAY (SKYLINE SERIES)
SAT 1 SEPTEMBER 6:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

DANNY BAKER – GOOD TIME CHARLIE'S BACK!!
MON 17 SEPTEMBER 7:30PM
TOWN HALL

CLARE BOWEN PLUS SUPPORT
SUN 2 SEPTEMBER 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

SIR CHRIS HOY HOW TO RIDE A BIKE
TUE 18 SEPTEMBER 7:30PM
TOWN HALL

AN EVENING WITH ADAM HENSON
THU 6 SEPTEMBER 7PM
TOWN HALL



DIONNE WARWICK DON'T MAKE ME OVER
THU 20 SEPTEMBER 8PM
SYMPHONY HALL

BRASSED OFF LIVE FEATURING GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY BAND
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL
FRI 7 SEPTEMBER 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

INDIANA JONES: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK IN CONCERT!
FRI 21 SEPTEMBER 7:30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

GRANDMASTER FLASH – HIP HOP PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS –
THE VISUAL EXPERIENCE
SAT 8 SEPTEMBER 8PM
TOWN HALL

RIP IT UP THE 60'S
MON 24 SEPTEMBER 7 30PM
SYMPHONY HALL

Town Hall Symphony Hall
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Birmingham City Council
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
Town Hall renovation also funded by
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LOTTERY FUNDED
PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

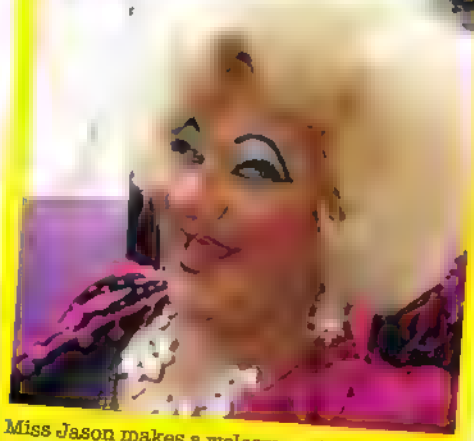
What's On

Mon 6 - Sun 12 August

The judges have spoken and a new Drag Idol winner has been crowned! If you weren't at the final, then not to worry, as Birmingham's Eden Bar is playing host to Felix La Freak this month! We haven't even seen her, so we'll be popping along to check her out too! See you there!

Thursday 9 August - Eden, Birmingham

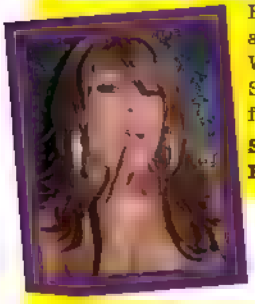
Miss Jason returns to The Village!



Miss Jason makes a welcome return to award-winning Birmingham gay venue The Village Inn on Friday 10 August. Expect great wit, fab vocals and an electric atmosphere. We can't think of a better way to begin the weekend - so grab your mates and head on down for a fun-filled Friday!

Friday 10 August - The Village Inn, Birmingham

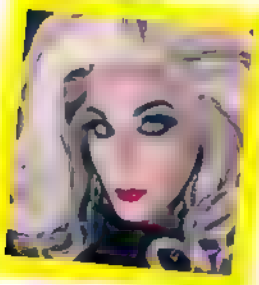
Sandra heads to Dudley



Heading on a night out in Dudley and fancy a good ol' drag queen? Well pop along to Bar Diva on Saturday the 11th and see that fiesty old gal live on stage.

Saturday 11 August - Bar Diva, Dudley

KY Kelly debuts in Shrewsbury



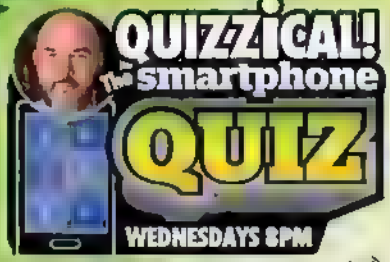
The first Monday of the month sees live cabaret at a popular Shrewsbury nightspot, Havana Republic. This month, it's the turn of debutant KY Kelly to take to the stage.

Monday 6 August - Havana Republic, Shrewsbury

Birmingham Fetish Men returns to Eden

Into your fetish gear? Then we're delighted to tell you that Birmingham Fetish Men returns to Eden Bar! It's the Midlands' biggest fetish event, so get involved!

Saturday 11 August - Eden, Birmingham



WITH DJ YOGI SpeedQuizzing

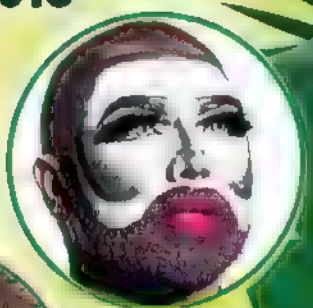
WITH DJ NIKKI

THUR 2nd — A NIGHT DEDICATED TO **SHIRLEY BASSEY** with Top Tribute Act

SAT 4th — **DANNY BEARD**

THUR 9th — **FELIX LA FREAK** DRAG IDOL WINNER 2018

SAT 11th — **BFM** BIRMINGHAM FETISH MEN
In The Marquee - Strict Dress Code - 9.30pm £7 Entry
Live entertainment and DJ



THUR 16th — **DANNY BEARD**

FRI 17th — **MIDS BEARS**

SAT 18th — **LISA Q JONES**

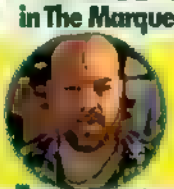
SUN 19th — **LEATHER SOCIAL**

THUR 23rd — A NIGHT DEDICATED TO **ALISON MOYET** with Stars In Their Eyes WINNER **JACQUII CANN**

SAT 25th — **MARY MAC**

FRI 31st — **I, REPLICA** a night dedicated to the music of **GARY NUMAN**
in The Marquee - entrance fee/tickets

18th DJ TONI LEE



4th & 25th DJ PONI

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Open from 2pm Every Day | 116 Sherlock St. Birmingham, B5 6NB | End of Hurst Street | 0121 622 1953 | www.TheEdenBar.co.uk

What's On

Mon 13 - Sun 19 August

Drag With No Name

You know that well known drag queen with the big hair? You know, the tall white wig? Well that's the Drag With No Name! And yes - she's coming back to Birmingham this month and we're excited! Check her out, we promise you you'll love it!

Friday 17 August - The Village Inn, Birmingham

Get Pounded

Who doesn't love £1 drinks? We certainly do, and we're sure you do too - so head down to The Nightingale every Thursday for a great and pleasingly cheap night out.

Every Thursday - The Nightingale, Birmingham

Furry fun with MidsBears

If you're a bear, or a friend of the bear community at large, then pop down to MidsBears at Eden every third Friday of the month. It's a great night out and attracts a fab crowd. Check it out - you'll love it!

Friday 17 August - Eden, Birmingham

Tina Sparkle brings all the boys to The Yard

There's more cabaret fun to be had at The Yard in Coventry! That's right, the venue has a different act on every Friday night and this week it's the turn of Tina Sparkle to take to the stage. Expect a night of comedy and a sing-a-long. Make your weekend one to remember!

Friday 17 August - The Yard, Coventry

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What's On

Mon 20 - Sun 26 August

Get ready for the Birmingham Pride Dance Arena!

Got anything planned for Bank Holiday Sunday? Why not take in the Birmingham Pride Dance Arena for the day, and night? Headline DJs include Shy FX, Shadow Child, Cause N Affect, Curtis Gabriel and The Stickmen. What a way to spend the day!

Sunday 26 August - Gay Village, Birmingham

Dudley gets ready for a Foam Party!

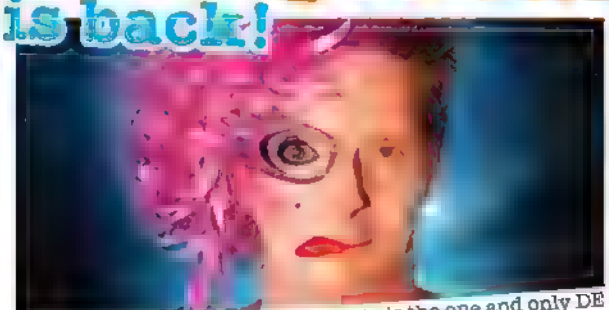
When was the last time you went to a foam party? Do you want to go again? Well you're in luck - the folks at Bar Diva in Dudly are hosting one over the Bank Holiday Weekend and it's gonna be poppin'!

Saturday 25 August - Bar Diva, Dudley

Wilma Fingadoo at The Boston

Out in Northampton for the night? If so, nip on down to The Boston and catch some live cabaret while you're there. This month sees a special performance from the incredible Wilma Fingadoo!

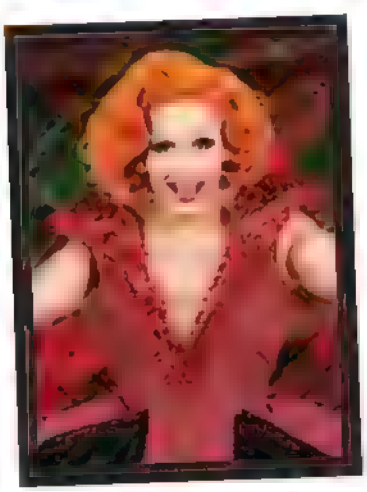
DE Experience is back!



One of our favourite ever cabaret acts is the one and only DE Experience. That's right, Jonathan Hellyer is back at The Village Inn in Birmingham for a Bank Holiday Weekend special and we can't wait. Make sure you're there and arrive early as it's always a busy one!

Friday 24 August - The Village Inn, Birmingham

Mary Mac returns to Eden Bar!



She's back for another night of cabaret fun! That's right, Scottish starlet Mary Mac returns to Eden for a sensational show featuring potty-mouthed humour and a right good sing-song! If you've not seen Mary yet, what the heck are you waiting for?!

Saturday 25 August - Eden, Birmingham

MISS PENNY'S FABULOUS MONDAYS!

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TICKETS WILL STILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE GATE BUT THE PRICE WILL DIFFER

What's On

Mon 27 - Fri 31 August

Party with Mike Emery!

If, like us, you love a midweek party, then you should head to Birmingham's Glamorous Bar for a night out with award-winning DJ Mike Emery
Mike will be playing the best tunes all night long to get you into the party spirit!

Every Monday, Wednesday & Friday
Glamorous, Birmingham

Sing with Sandra at The Village Inn!

This week's Friday night cabaret at Birmingham's award winning Village Inn is provided by drag veteran Sandra London. Sandra will be presenting an evening of cracking comedy and singalong magic. What's not to like?

Friday 31 August - The Village Inn, Birmingham

Head to Saathi at The Nightingale

Saathi is Birmingham's biggest and best Asian monthly LGBT night and it's nearly time for another instalment.
It's £10 entry before midnight and runs until 4am in the morning!
Friday 31 August - The Nightingale, Birmingham

Anyone for cocktails?

You've had a great weekend partying in Brum's gay village - and then along comes Monday to bring you crashing back down to earth with a bang? Fear not, there's still fun to be had! Every Monday, The Loft runs its hugely popular Cocktail Club, serving two cocktails for just a tenner from 5pm until late.
There's a massive menu to choose from too.

Every Monday - The Loft, Birmingham

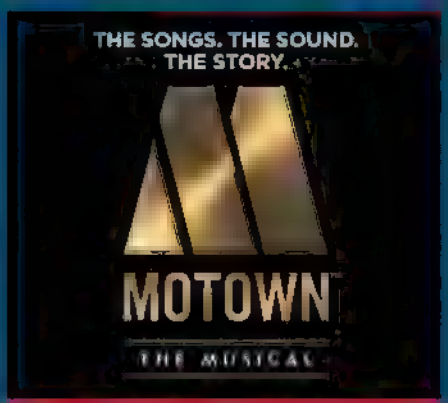
COMING TO THE NEW ALEXANDRA THEATRE

WED 22 – SAT 25 AUG

CAP Sat 25 Aug 2.30pm

THU 30 AUG – SAT 1 SEP

TUE 25 – SAT 29 SEP



THU 11 OCT – SAT 3 NOV

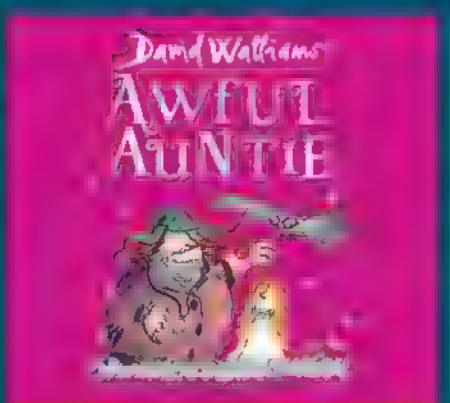
AD Wed 31 Oct 2.30pm

MON 5 – SAT 10 NOV

TUE 13 – SAT 17 NOV

AD Thu 15 Nov 7.30pm

MON 19 – SAT 24 NOV



TUE 27 NOV – SAT 1 DEC

MON 3 – SAT 29 DEC

AD Sat 6 Dec 2.30pm BSL Wed 12 Dec 7.30pm

CAP Wed 19 Dec 7.30pm

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What's On

Arts | Theatre | Entertainment

John Grant

Fresh from supporting Elbow on their recent UK tour, John Grant visits Symphony Hall to perform a standing gig, the first ever to take place at the prestigious venue.
John will be singing songs from his third and most recent album, Grey Tickles, Black Pressure, and is looking forward to giving his Birmingham audience a night to remember.
"I do think the album's great, and I'm really proud of it," he says. "I wanted to get moodier and angrier on this record, but I probably had a lot more fun making it."

Thursday 16 August, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Britney Spears

Yes you heard right! Britney Spears will be performing her final UK arena tour date of her hit Las Vegas residency show, in Birmingham at the end of this month!

"Britney. Piece of Me" has been seen by some of Hollywood's biggest names - Beyoncé, Jay Z, Lady Gaga, Kirsten Dunst and Calvin Harris included.

Bag yourself a ticket now if you want to experience Britney classics '...Baby One More Time', 'I'm A Slave 4 U', 'Toxic' and '(You Drive Me) Crazy, in a phenominal set list that will keep you dancing all night long.

Grammy-Award winning, multi- platinum selling artist Pitbull joins Britney.

Friday 31 August, Genting Arena, Birmingham

The Full Monty

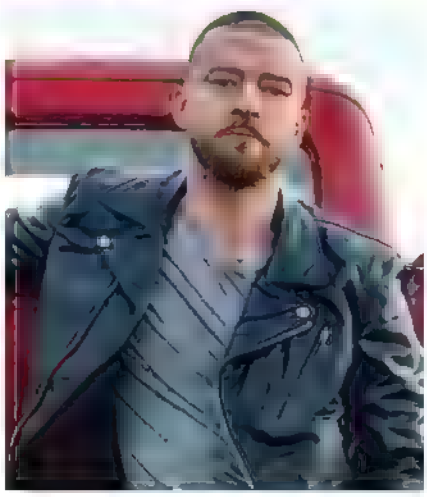
When six men lose their jobs at the local steelworks, they find that dignity, hope and self belief are suddenly in short supply. Until, that is, they take the plunge and become male strippers .. This brand new production is of course based on the hit 1996 movie of the same title, with the Old Joint Stock promising audiences an 'up close and personal' experience...

Wednesday 8 August - Saturday 1 September, Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

Justin Timberlake

Justin Timberlake has sold more than 32 million albums and 56 million singles, making him one of the world's best-selling artists. Following his last tour - the critically acclaimed 20/20 Experience, which sold out arenas and stadiums around the world in 2013 and '14 - the global superstar here makes a welcome return to Birmingham with The Man Of The Woods tour.

Monday 27 August, Arena Birmingham



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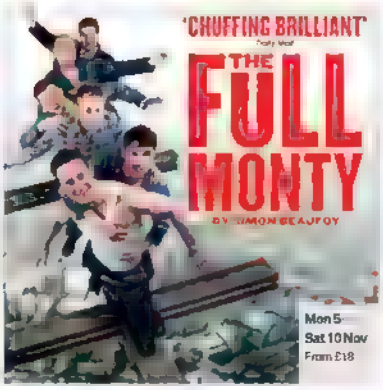
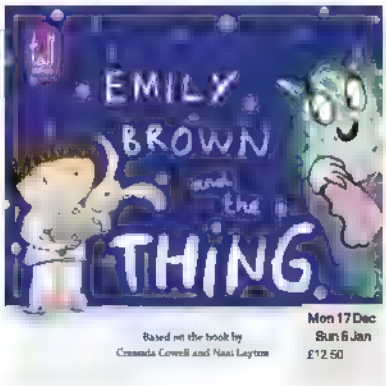
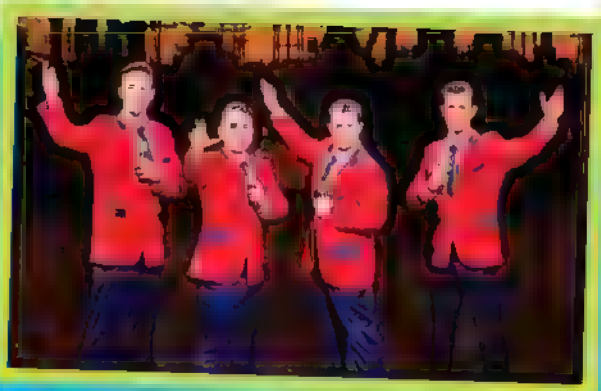




BenDeLaCreme's Inferno A-Go-Go

Best known as Miss Congeniality from season six of RuPaul's Drag Race - and voted one of the show's 15 'fan favourite queens of all time', to boot - BenDeLaCreme (known to her fans as 'DeLa') presents shows which combine her back ground in the performing & visual arts with a deep love of spectacle, glamour and, er, Saturday morning cartoons! Inferno A-Go-Go is the third show DeLa's written, following on from the critically acclaimed Terminally Delightful and Cosmos. It's being performed in the Midlands as part of a big ol' UK tour

Sunday 26 August, O2 Academy, Birmingham



Jersey Boys

Sunshine Festival

Back with a fantastic mix of big name pop acts and retro stars, the heart of England's 'favourite family festival' returns to Upton-upon-Severn for its ninth year
As well as featuring a line-up assembled to appeal to every generation, the event also includes a disco, a karaoke and a range of fun activities for kids to enjoy Fancy dress is encouraged.

Friday 24 - Sunday 26 August, Upton-upon-Severn

The Miseducation of Cameron Post

Conversion therapy is a bit of a hot potato at the moment, so this coming of age movie should certainly strike a few topical chords.
The film tells the story of Cameron Post, a 12 year-old girl from Montana who's just discovering her homosexuality when she loses both her parents in a car crash.
Sent to live with her conservative Aunt Ruth, Cameron develops a relationship with a female friend, is eventually outed, and then finds herself sent to Promise, a special camp that aims to enlighten her about 'appropriate gender roles'... **Released Friday 3 August**

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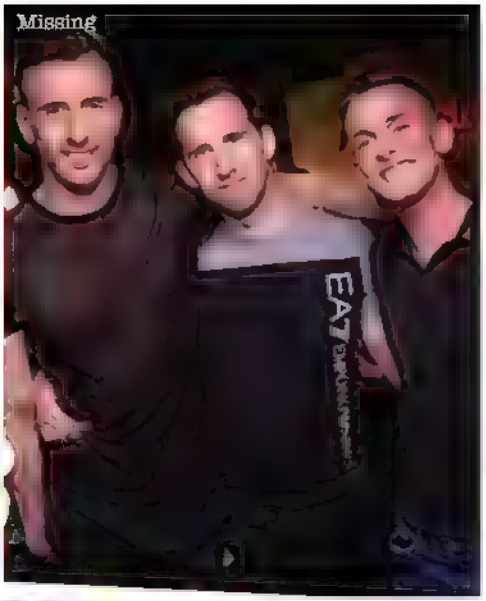
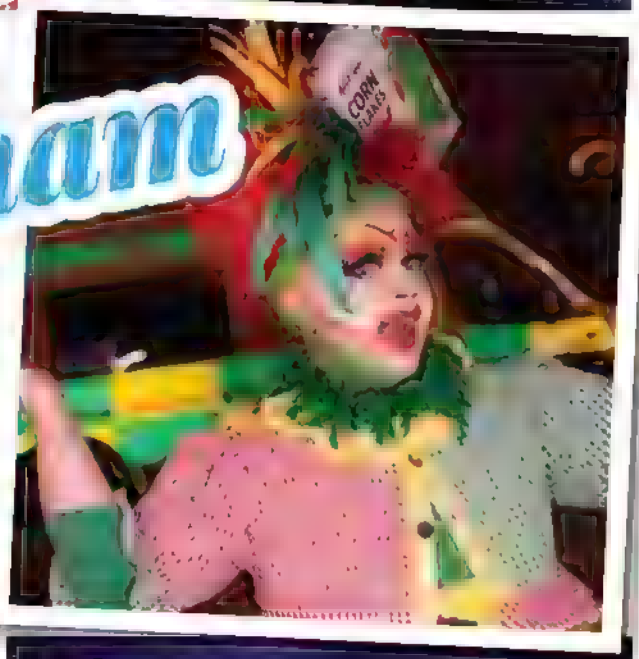
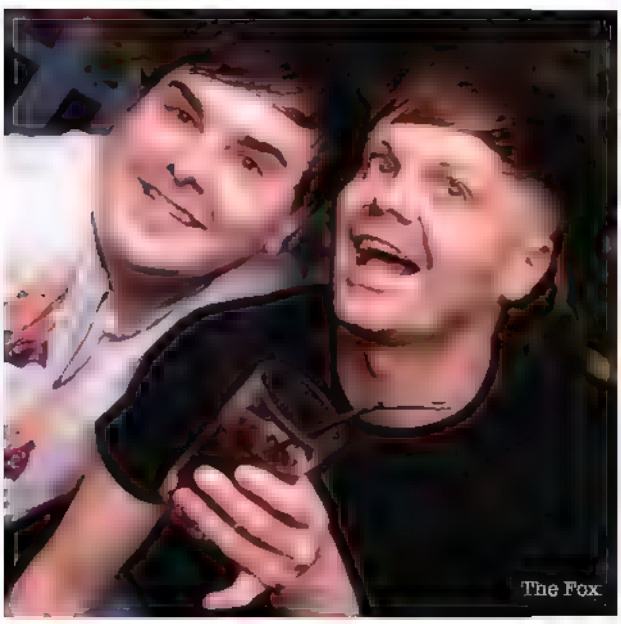


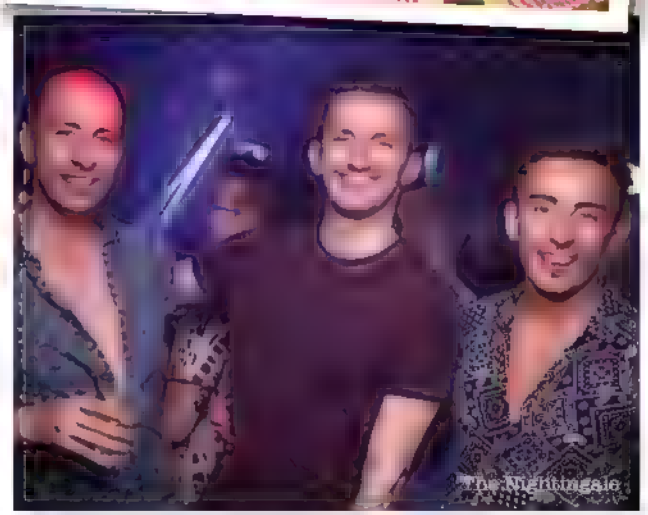
Party all night in vibrant Birmingham



If you're out for the night in Birmingham, then the city's gay scene is a great place to be!

With over 15 bars and clubs to choose from, there really is something for everyone! It's a truly fab night out!





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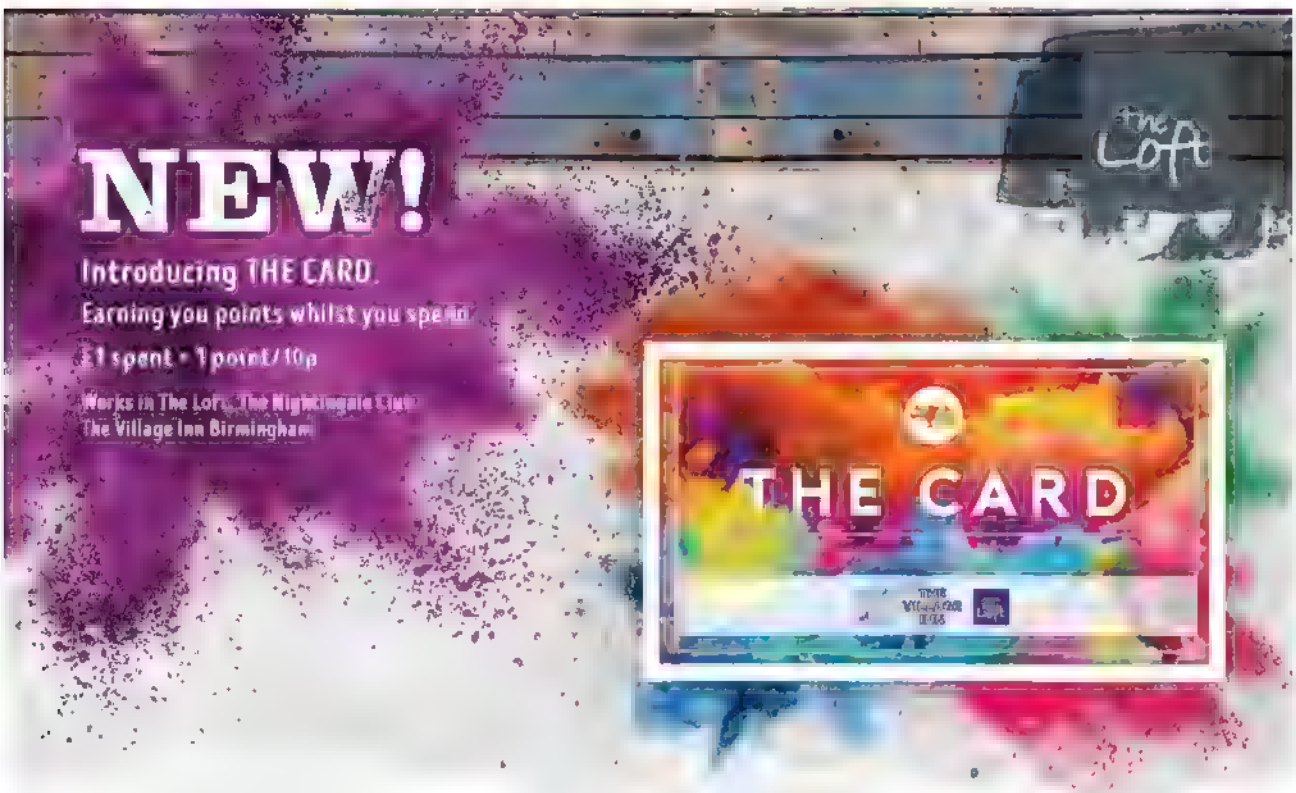
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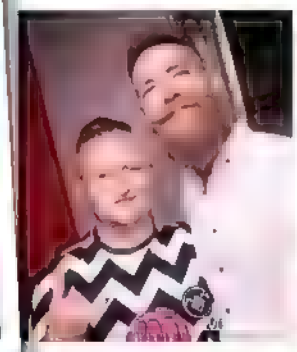
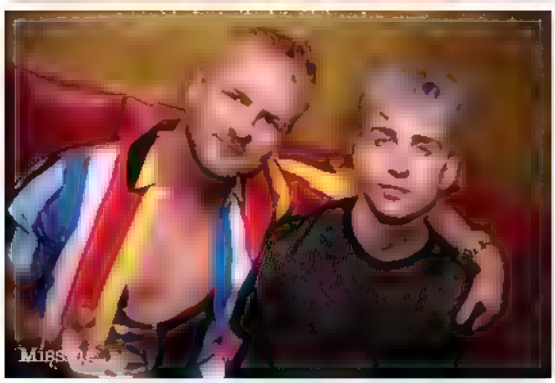
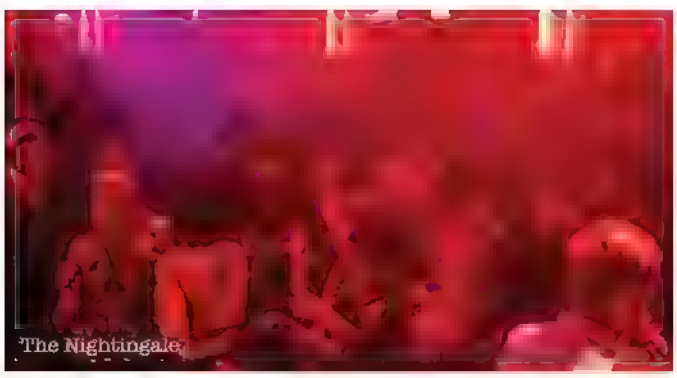
Party all night in reborn Birmingham







The Village Inn

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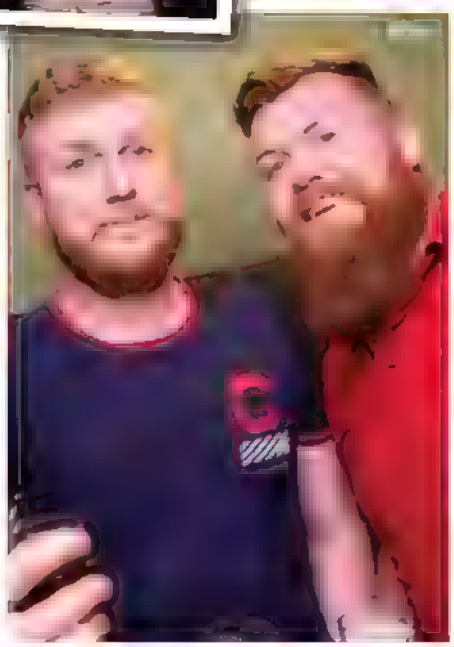
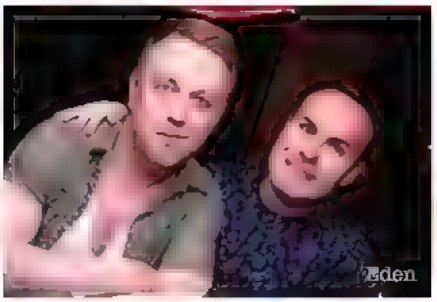
The Fox




Eden

The Village

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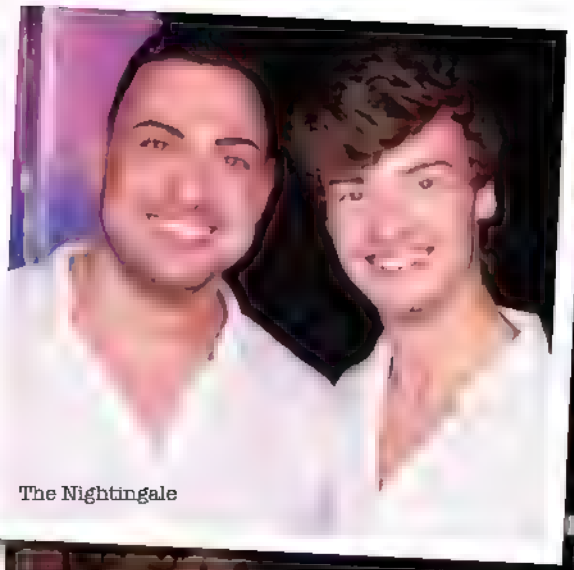
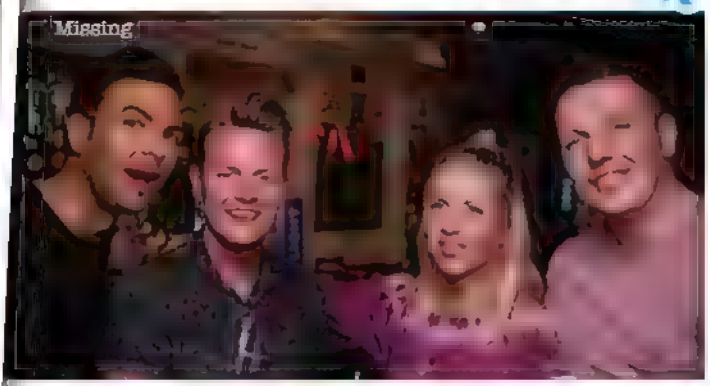
Party all night in reborn Birmingham


The Nightingale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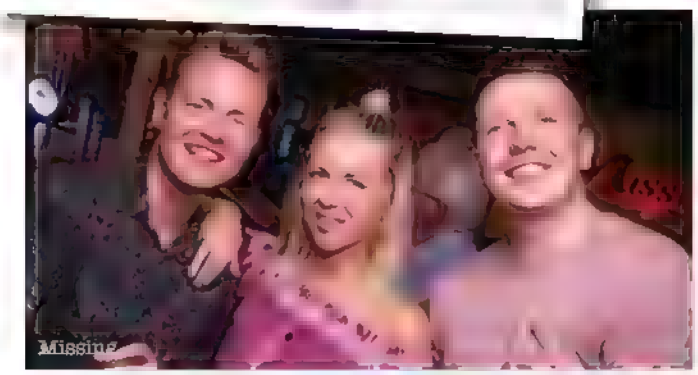
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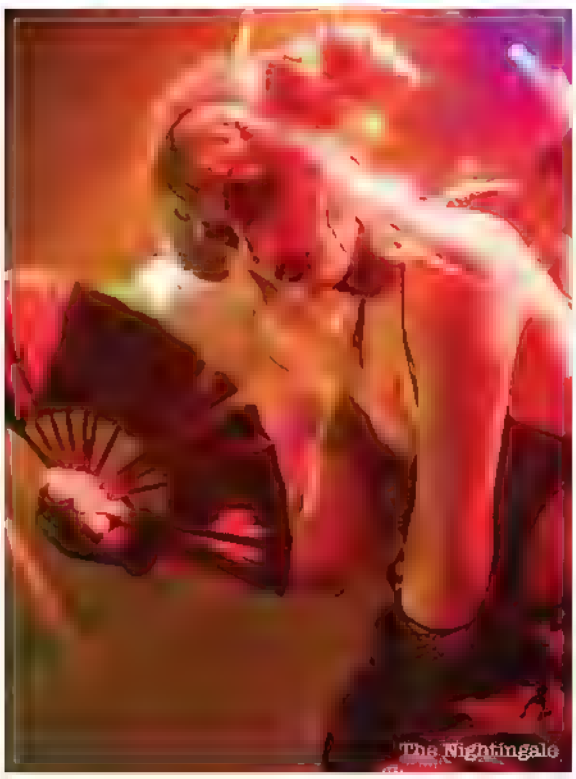
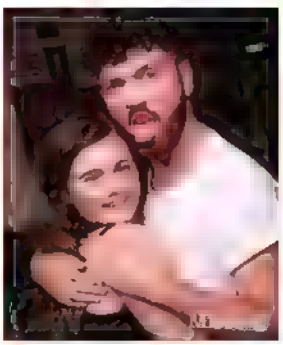
The Loft


The Nightingale



The Nightingale

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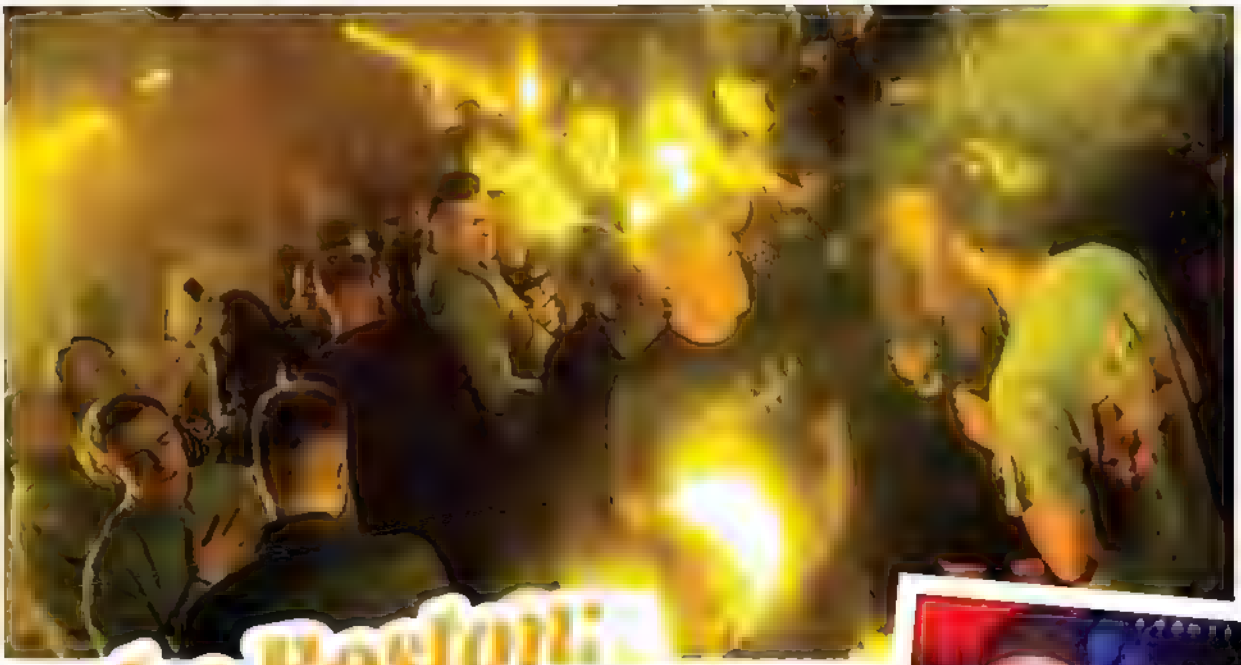
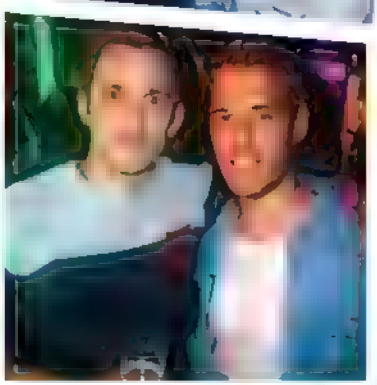
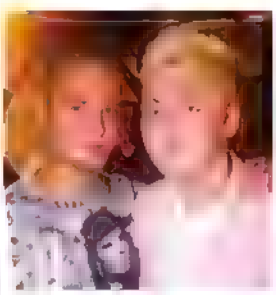


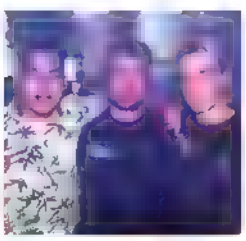
The Boston: A fab night out in Northampton

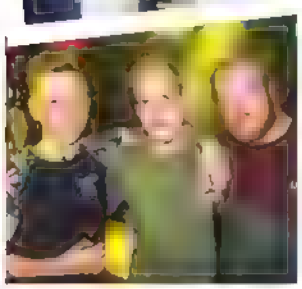
If you're heading for a big ol' gay night out in Northampton, then be sure to swing by the ever-popular venue, The Boston!

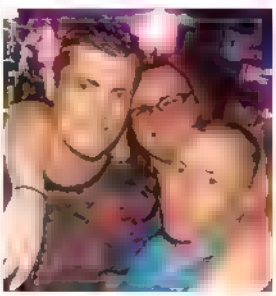
A top evening of fun and frivolity awaits you, with great music, fabulous drinks offers and even better company, so be sure to pop by for a big rainbow rave!











Pictures by Laura Byrne

gorgeous
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WOLVERHAMPTON
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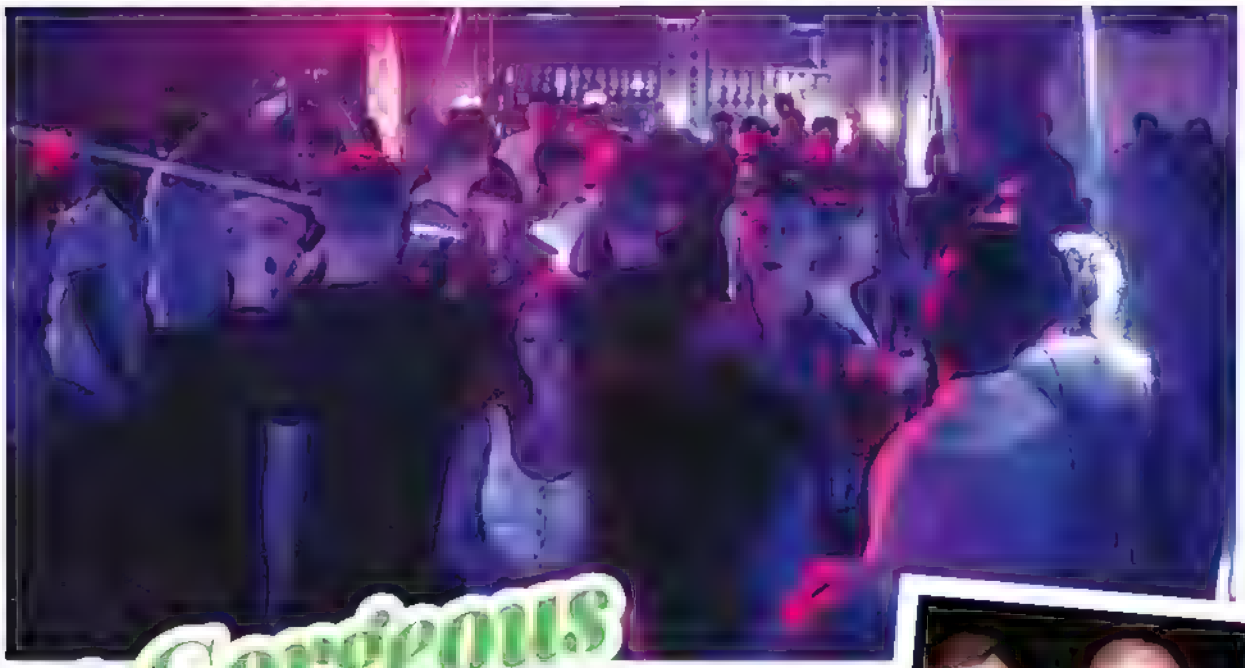
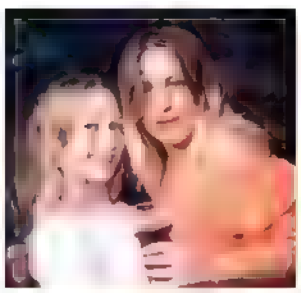
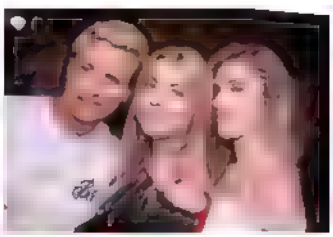


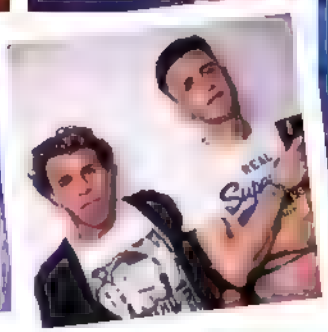
A Gorgeous night out in Wolverhampton

If you're looking to party in Wolverhampton, head down to local LGBT venue Gorgeous for an evening of top-class revelry!

Bringing together a great atmosphere, cracking drinks offers, fabulous customers and fantastic music, the venue offers a truly Gorgeous night out!







Pictures by Laura Byrne

the yard

AUGUST

CABARET

FRIDAY 10TH
JADE JUSTINE

FRIDAY 24TH
MISS THUNDERPUSSY

FRIDAY 3RD
MISS MARTY

FRIDAY 17TH
TINA SPARKLE

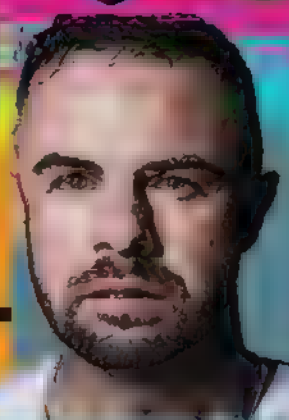
FRIDAY 30TH
GLITORIS GIRLS

Saturday's
PARTY NIGHT

BANK HOLIDAY SUNDAY

DJ PAUL MORRELL

30TH AUGUST CLUB CLASSICS

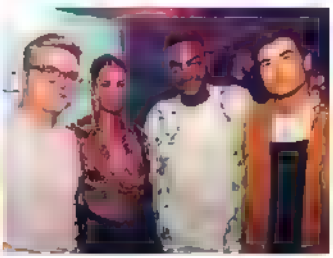


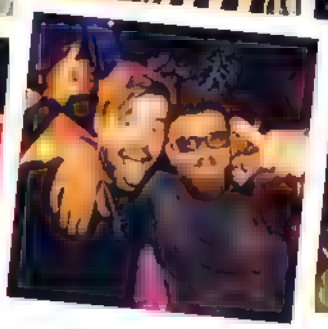
THE YARD, 11-12 BULL YARD, COVENTRY, CV1 1LH WWW.THEYARDCOVENTRY.CO.UK

It's a great night out at The Yard

Last month The Yard in Coventry played host to Bizarre Inc. vocalist Angie Brown - and boy, didn't everybody have some fantastic fun!

Each week the venue provides special-guest cabaret, karaoke, amazing drinks offers and a whole lot more. If you've not made it over there yet, what're you waiting for?!





Pictures by The Yard

Bar Diva

AUGUST

SANDRA
LIVE ON
STAGE 12:30AM

SATURDAY
11TH AUGUST

FOAM party
11PM-
1AM

SATURDAY
25TH AUGUST

THURSDAY'S — GET POUNDED KARAOKE WITH MISS ANNIE

FRIDAY'S — FREAKY FRIDAY'S WITH GUEST DJ'S

SATURDAY'S — FIERCE SATURDAY'S WITH FEIRCE FANTASY DJ'S

SUNDAY'S — SIZZLING SUNDAYS FUN, GAMES AND RODEO BULL WITH MISS MO BILITY AND MARGARET

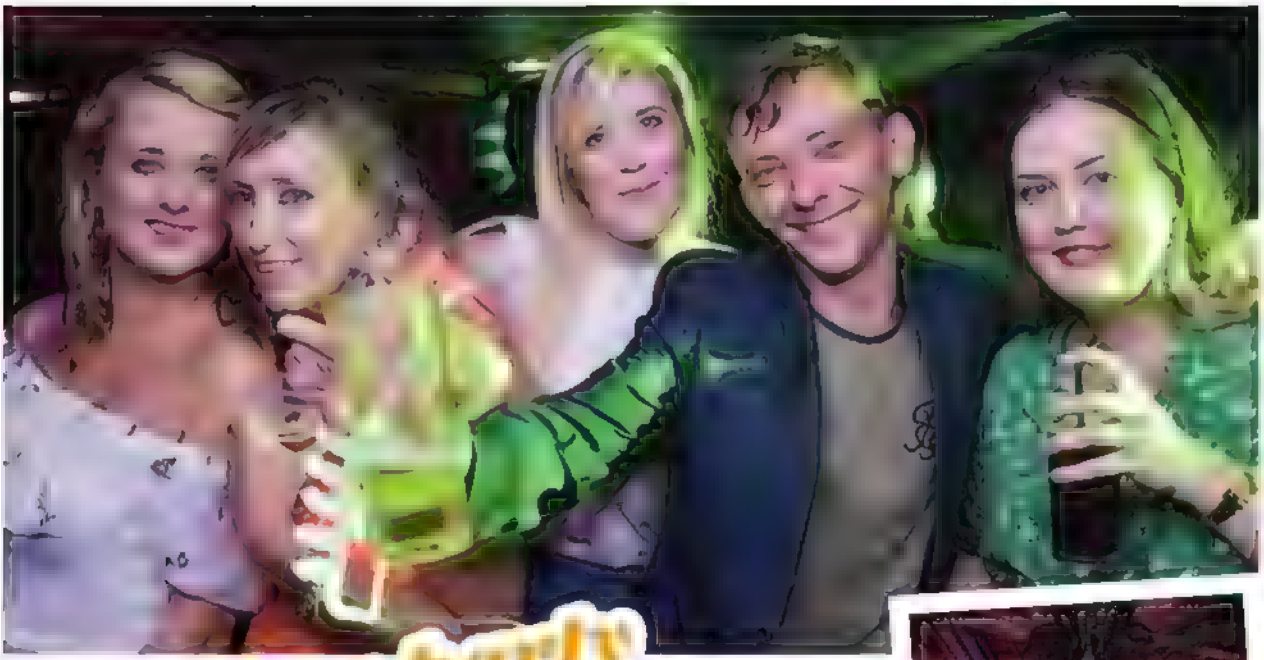
MONDAY'S — HITMAN & HER STUDENTS NIGHT WITH DJ NELSON AND MISS ANNIE

BAR DIVA

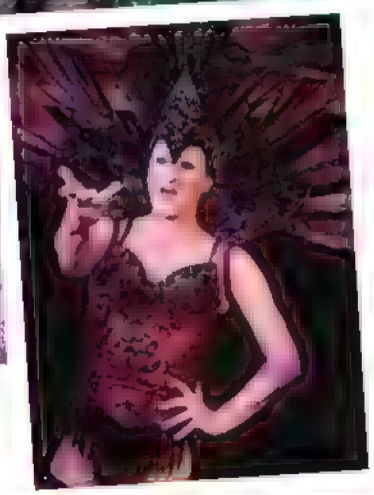
AWARD WINNER

Lower Plaza Mall King Street DY2 8NZ Dudley

BarDivaThePlaceToBe

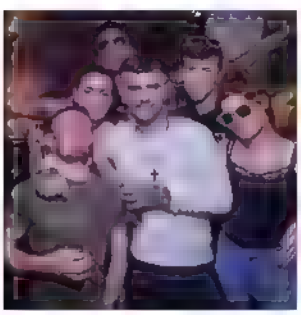


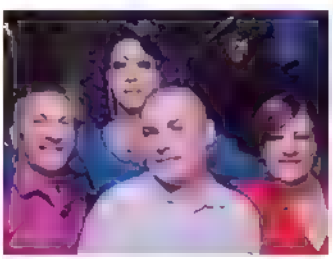
There's a party to be had at Bar Diva

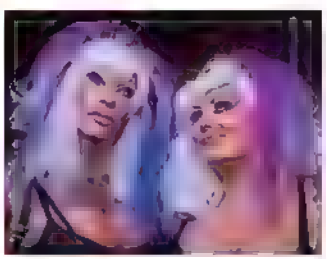


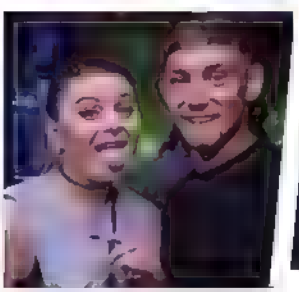
Fancy partying somewhere a bit different? Then head for Bar Diva in Dudley!

A good laugh, great drinks offers and a fantastic atmosphere are pretty much guaranteed when you visit the popular venue, so get set for a night to remember!









Pictures by Laura Byrne

GAY BARS & CLUBS IN THE MIDLANDS...

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Holloway Circus B1 1EG
Tel 0121 643 8344

BOLTZ CLUB
Lower Essex St, B5 6QP
Tel 0121 666 6888

CLUB CHIC
28 Horsefair B1 1DD
Tel 0121 666 6806

THE CORE
Sherlock St, B5 6NB
Tel 0121 622 2797
www.thecoreclub.co.uk

DEVILS KITCHEN
Kent St, B5 6NB

EDEN BAR
Sherlock St, B5 6NB
Tel 0121 622 1953
www.theedenbar.co.uk
/eden.bar

RHAPSODY BAR
Hurst St, B5 6SE
Tel 0121 622 4046

FOUNTAIN INN
Wrentham St B5 6QL
Tel 0121 622 1452

THE FOX
17 Lower Essex St,
B5 6SN Tel: 0121 622 3213

GLAMOROUS
27 Hurst St, B5 4BD
www.glamorousbirmingham.co.uk
/Glamorousbirmingham

THE LOFT
142 Bromsgrove St,
B5 6RG
Tel 0121 6222 444
www.theloftlounge.co.uk
/The-Loft-Lounge

MISSING BAR
Hurst St, B5 6NU
Tel 0121 622 4256
www.missingbar.co.uk
/missingbar

THE NIGHTINGALE
Kent St, B5 6RD
Tel 0121 622 1718
www.nightingaleclub.co.uk
/thenightingaleclub

SIDEWALK
Hurst Street, B5 6SE
Tel: 0121 666 6220
www.sidewalkbirmingham.co.uk

THE VILLAGE INN
Hurst St, B5 4BD
Tel 0121 622 4742
www.villagebirmingham.co.uk
/villageinnbirmingham

THE WELLINGTON
12 Bristol St B5 7AH
Tel 0121 622 2592

West Midlands

COVENTRY

GLAMOROUS COVENTRY
88 Short St, CV1 2LX
www.glamorouscoventry.co.uk
/GlamorousCoventry

KIKI LOUNGE & LOFT
Earsdon High St CV5 6ET

THE YARD
11-12 Bar Yard, CV1 1EH
Tel 02475 012959
www.theyardcoventry.co.uk
/TheYardCoventry

DUDLEY

BAR DIVA
Lower Plaza Kingsway
DY2 8NZ Tel

GLOUCESTER

THE WESTGATE
Westgate Street GL1 2NF
Tel 01452 690045

KIDDERMINSTER

ROYAL EXCHANGE
31 New Road DY10 1AF
Tel. 01562 228619

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THE PEACH TREE
18-21 Abbey Foregate
Tel 01743 355055
www.thepeachtree.co.uk
/ThePeachTreeRestaurant

HAVANA REPUBLIC
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SY2 6AE
Tel 01743 271821
www.havanarepublic.co.uk
/HavanaRepublic

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Tel 01538 382812

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GOSSIP
4 Hope Street ST1 5BT
Tel 01782 204957

PINK
93 Stafford Street, ST1 1LS
Tel 01782 272772

STOURBRIDGE

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20 Market St, DY8 1AG
Tel 07826 518478

STRATFORD upon AVON

NO.7
Prowd Crowd. 1st Mon
monthly. 7 Windsor St.
Tel 07787 642510

TELFORD

THREE FURNACES
30 Bridgnorth Rd, Madeley
TF7 4JB 01952 588521

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THE LION
Birchills St. WS2 8NG
Tel 01922 610977

THE RED LION
Park St. WS1 1NW
Tel 01922 637790

WOLVERHAMPTON

BOND STREET TAVERN
14 Bond St. WV2 4AS
Tel 07825 305050

GORGEOUS
School St. WV1 4LF
Tel 01902 427247
/gorgeousbar

WORCESTER

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50 Lowesmoor WR1 2SG
Tel 01905 780467

East Midlands

VELVET CLUB
Angel Row WR1 3QN
Tel 01905 20218

DERBY

THE CROWN INN
40 Curzon St DE1 1LL
Tel 01332 381742

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DOVER CASTLE
34 Dover St. LE1 6PT
Tel. 0116 255 3052

HELSINKI
94 Rutland St LE1 1SB
Tel 0116 254 7568

RAINBOW & DOVE
185 Charles St LE1 1LA
Tel. 0116 254 7568

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YOLO Gay every Wed
Belgrave Gate. LE1 3GR
Tel: 0116 251 7986

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College St NN1 2QP
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Street. NG1 3BA. (Gay
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WIN! Tickets to **Kinky Boots** at the Wolves Grand!

Hit musical Kinky Boots is heading to the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre - and we've got one pair of tickets to give away to a lucky reader for the evening show on Wednesday 17 October!

Featuring songs from Grammy and Tony Award-winning pop icon Cyndi Lauper, Kinky Boots takes you from a Northampton factory floor to the glamorous catwalks of Milan.

Based on the cult film of the same name, the show finds Charlie Price struggling to live up to his father's expectations and continue the family's shoe-making business. With the factory's future hanging by a thread, help arrives in the unlikely but spectacular form of Lola - a fabulous performer in need of some sturdy new stilettos...

Following his critically acclaimed performances in Australia, Callum Francis pulls on the boots to play Lola. He's joined by Paula Lane (as Lauren), who's best known for starring as Kylie Platt in Coronation Street, and West End favourite Joel Harper-Jackson (as Charlie)

Kinky Boots struts into the Wolverhampton Grand from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 27 October.

Grab tickets now at grandtheatre.co.uk

Enter the competition via our Facebook page at @midlandszone

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WEDNESDAYS
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ANY PIZZA & PINT £10
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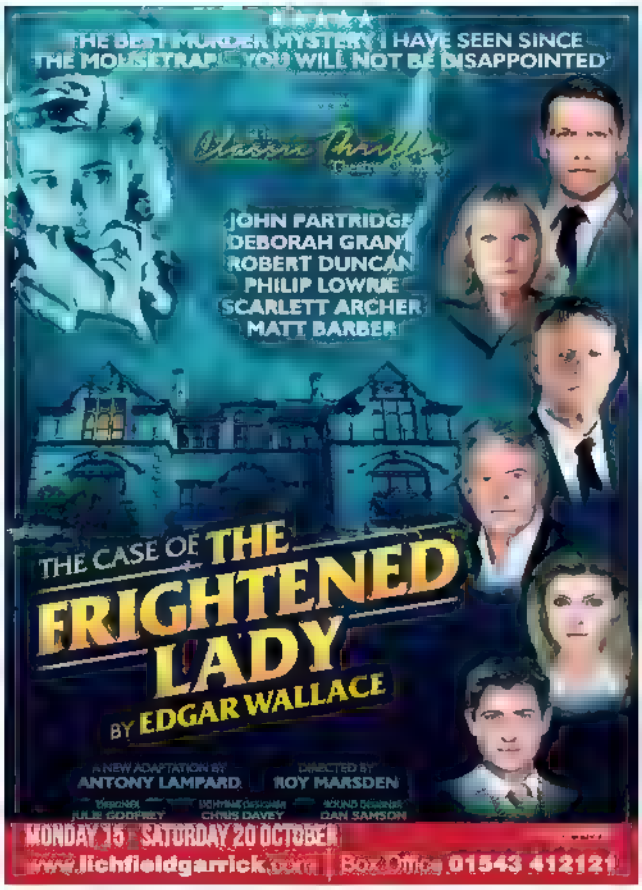
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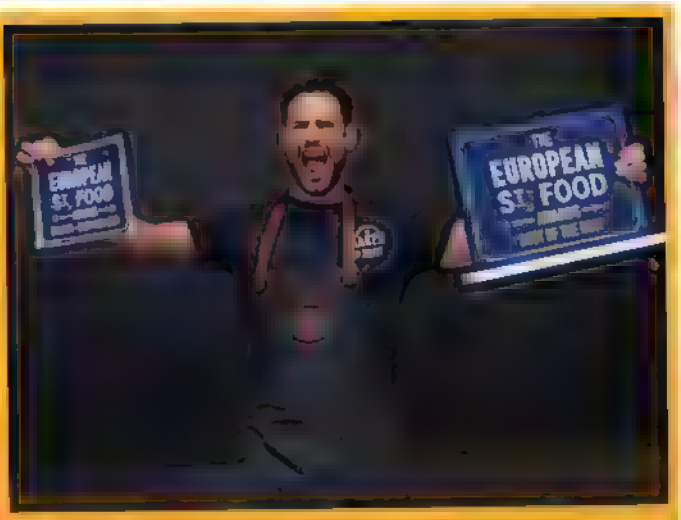
munch

Food and drink news from across the Midlands...



Award-winning Baked In Brick opens restaurant in Brum's Custard Factory

Rum & Reggae event returns to Coventry's FarGo Village

The ever-popular Rum & Reggae event returns to FarGo Village in Coventry on Friday 3 August (from 5pm). Highlights include Caribbean street food from Leave It To Esmie, Dookie's Grill, Cornography and West Jerk Centre, and speciality rum and cocktails from FarGo Bar, Trailer Made Cocktails and Backhaus & Co. Live music is provided by Phase One Steel Orchestra, with DJ Dave Marshall Barrett on the decks.

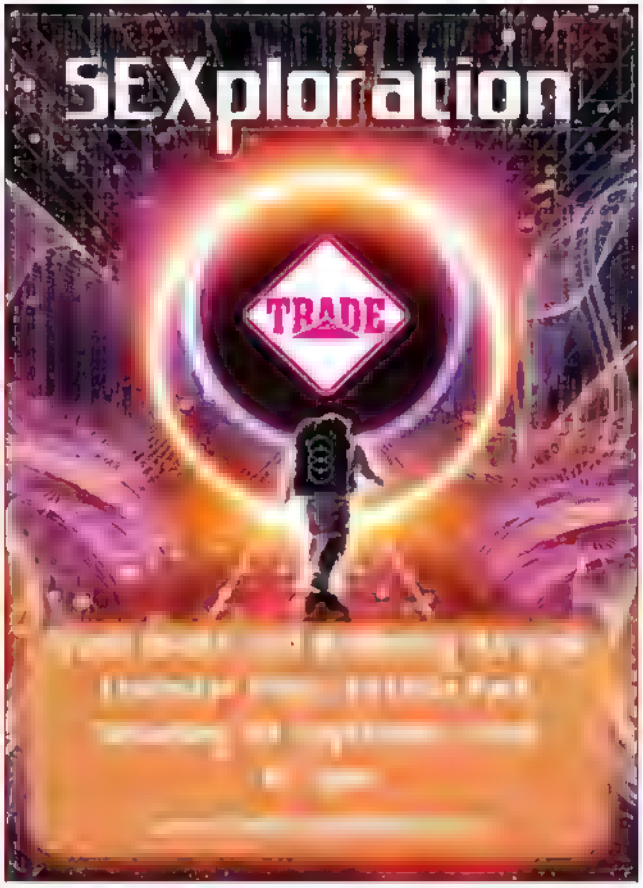
Supermarket chain Tesco has launched an adults-only alco-popsicle. The Pimm's POP comes in at 4.3% alcohol by volume, is a strictly for-over-18s summer beverage and displays a clear age-restriction label.
Pimm's POP is available 'in all good Tesco stores' at £2.50 for two 80ml lollies

Fat balls aplenty as international dumpling festival heads to Brum

Fat balls of mouthwatering deliciousness are the name of the game at Level in Digbeth next month (22 September), when Taste And Liquor present The Juicy Dumpling Festival.
Whether you like your dumplings big, fat, steamed, fried, sweet, savory, stewed or boiled, the guys will almost certainly have something to make you coo, sigh, purr or moan - depending on how you respond to having a fat ball or two stuffed in your cakehole!
Early Bird tickets for the festival are currently on sale from £7 at eventbrite.co.uk

LGBT POLSKA

LGBT Polska is a social meet up group for the Polish LGBT community and their friends in the West Midlands



Further information available:
www.leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk

Free, private and confidential sexual health checks to gay & bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Amigos Leisure

Day: Thursdays
Time: 3pm - 6pm (Last appointment 5.30pm)

Place: 30 Bedford Street South, Leicester, LE1 3JR

Splash Spa & Leisure

Day: Tuesdays
Time: 11am - 2pm (Last appointment 1.40pm)

Day: Thursdays
Time: 3pm - 6pm (Last appointment 5.30pm)

Place: 61 Bedford Street, Leicester, LE1 3JR

TRADE

You can also check out Trade Sexual Health:

www.tradesexualhealth.com

Amir 3-in-1 Phone Lens

Add an extra dimension to your Instagram photos for very little money using the Amir 3-in-1 phone lens kit. Offering a fisheye lens, 10x macro lens and a 0.4x wide-angle lens, the Amir 3-in-1 lens kit breathes new life into your photos with a few unique effects that are sure to boost your Instagram game!

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amazon.co.uk

PEMOTech Phone Tripod

If you're taking selfies or nice landscape pictures, then don't trust that shaky hand of yours. Get your mits on a tripod that bends and moves into the ideal position. The PEMOTech comes with GoPro mounts too, as well as a Bluetooth button enabling you to take your photos from afar.

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amazon.co.uk

Insta Accessories

Love Instagram? Then take a look at four fantastic accessories to help you up your game...

Selfie LED Ring Light

The perfect Instagram photo requires the perfect light. This selfie LED ring light contains 36 LEDs to provide an even lighting coverage, enabling you to pull off the ultimate selfie! The best bit? There's no extra software required, and it just clips onto your phone!

£[illegible]

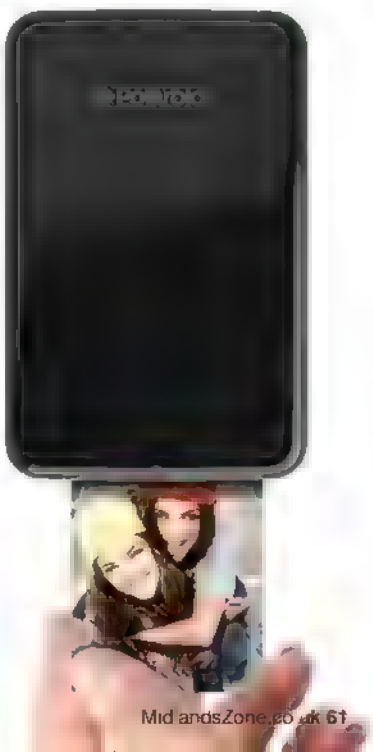
amazon.co.uk

Polaroid ZIP Wireless Mobile Photo Printer

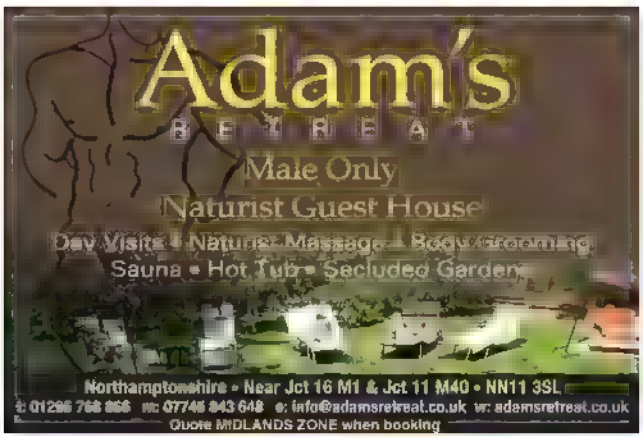
You can now enjoy all the power and fun of Polaroid instant print cameras without the need for the actual camera.
This standalone mobile printer is designed to print vibrant, colourful photos from a variety of sources. It features its own rechargeable 500mAh lithium polymer battery. After just 1.5 hours of charging time, it's ready to print an impressive 25 sheets.

£99.00

amazon.co.uk



MGM
BIRMINGHAM
Mature Gay Men
Meeting at 8pm the 1st Tuesday of the Month
MGM Midlands.org.uk
mgmbham@gmail.com
Call Tom for details - 07899 335677
The Fox, Lower Essex Street, Birmingham, B5 6SN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66 The Happy Prince 99

As soon as I'd heard that there was another film coming out about Oscar Wilde, I knew I had to see it. I still love Wilde, that classic cinematic bio from 1997 with Stephen Fry and Jude Law which charts the rise, trial and imprisonment of Oscar in the 1890s. The film's open portrayal of male sexuality pushed the boundaries at a time when gay sex, just as it was in the 1890s, was very much taboo.

This new offering, written and directed by the fabulous Rupert Everett, who takes the lead role, sets out to achieve something entirely different. Gone is the principal focus on Oscar's rise in polite society and dramatic trial. Instead, the lens, and indeed the audience, are witting witnesses to the writer's terrible decline after his release from prison.

So often, films shy away from this brutal episode of his decline and death. Not here, though. Instead, it's only through fleeting flashbacks and scant memories that we see his earlier life and career. The movie is gritty and beautiful at the same time.

For those who don't know Wilde's story, it's essentially a simple one. An Irish literary genius who studied at Oxford, Oscar made his name writing magnificent works such as The Importance Of Being Earnest, Salome and An Ideal Husband. His wit, eloquence and barbed observations made him the darling of London society. As he rose in position and favour, Oscar was caught between fame and infamy. Despite his marriage to Constance Lloyd in 1884 and the fathering of two children, Cyril and Vyvyan, Wilde loved and regularly slept with men. In the 1890s, those at the top generally turned a blind eye, as long as everything was done with a degree of secrecy, hidden behind a cloak of shame.

The most infamous of all his relationships was with Lord Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas, the younger son of the Marquees of Queensbury. As their affair grew deeper and more public, the Marquees (of the same family who created the Queensbury rules in boxing) was having none of the associated disgrace. He publicly accused Wilde of 'posing as a sodomite' in an age when homosexuality was illegal. Wilde, in turn, sued for libel. Eventually, Oscar ended up in the dock on charges of gross indecency. He received a two-year prison sentence of hard labour, spent in various jails including, most famously, Reading, where he penned the deeply moving De Profundis. Victorian polite society turned its back on the one-time golden boy. By the time of his release, Oscar was essentially a broken man, dying two years later in abject squalor, penniless and bereft of social redemption.

Marked by a growing use of cocaine and a propensity for regularly losing himself in alcohol, Wilde's final two years are spent at the bottom. Only two friends remain loyal to him - Robbie Ross (Edwin Thomas) and Reginald 'Reggie' Turner (Colin Firth), who whisk Wilde to France immediately after his release from prison. But like all lovers who 'worship love', Oscar cannot forget Bosie (Colin Morgan), and despite his friends' pleas not to contact him, the disgraced playwright simply cannot help himself. Bosie is arrogant, beautiful and certainly alluring to Wilde. He's under his skin. Putting aside his friends' pleas, Wilde calls him back. Before long, a doomed relationship reignites. They head to Naples, to live the life of the libertine. But when the world catches up with them, Oscar has what's best described as an epiphany. Bosie, Wilde finally realises and accepts, will ultimately destroy him. Increasingly lost and dejected, the playwright returns to Paris, reclaiming his friendships with Robbie and Reggie.

The most painful part of the film for me could be as real today as it was then. Oscar is sitting reading his paper outside a cafe in Paris. He's spotted by a group of English tourists. These guys start hurling homophobic abuse at him, and as Oscar is hurried away by Reggie and Robbie, they're chased through the streets by the gang. Only when the trio are cornered in a church does Wilde turn the tide and lambast them, shouting almost tearfully, "The natural habitat of the hypocrite is England!"
For Wilde, this is certainly true. My heart was in my stomach.

Everett presents Wilde's final years as a time spent befriending young, beautiful men, while he pays for sex. He carouses with the people of the street and returns time and again to a rent boy and his young brother, who tags along just to hear Wilde's story of The Happy Prince. The telling of the story is a poignant reminder of Oscar's disgrace and detachment from his family, brought about by a society that refused to accept him for what he truly was - a bisexual man. It's a cruel acknowledgement that finds its mark.

It was also wonderful to see subtle nods to the 1997 film. Tom Wilkinson, who played the Marquees of Queensbury back then, returns as the Catholic priest brought to Oscar shortly before his death, so that he could be baptised into the Catholic faith.

I loved this film. It's a gritty, honest telling of a legend's decline, and is both intensely human and deeply moving. Be sure to see The Happy Prince when you can. If you love a good story about human passion and possible redemption, this is definitely one for you.

CAT'S CORNER

"Body envy"

I haven't eaten for days now. I can't wait until September comes, and I can stop pretending to be the sort of person who might, with just a little will power, feel okay about wearing a bikini. And then it will be Christmas and I can relax into having the sort of body that could happily wear a Santa suit without needing any sort of artificial padding.

I know it's ridiculous but my feelings about my weight are entirely seasonal. I stay more or less the same weight all year round but my desire to be thinner fluctuates with the amount of sunshine. On paper, I'm the sort of person who doesn't give a g string about what anyone thinks of me. I don't care what people say, how they view me or whether I fit into their perception of what attractive is. But in practice I seem to mind quite a lot about how much of me hangs out of a swimsuit and how much is neatly tucked away behind a Nike logo.

Doing very much about it isn't really a factor. I don't seem to have the energy for completing crash diets, and the weather is never quite right for effective spurts of exercise. It really is just a mental thing. In the summer, I worry about my weight, and in the winter I'm happy just to cover it all up.

The only explanation I have for this seasonal concern about whether I look right is that I have to look at everyone else. I'm swayed both by those bodies that look absolutely zinging and those that don't look so fantastic. Which then gets me to thinking. If I'm looking at other bodies and hoping I don't look like that, other people must be looking at me too and wishing that I would cover everything up with a nice shapeless winter fleece. Why do we judge each other so much on how we look?

I have a friend with two pre-school children who is batting to bring them up to feel that physical appearance is of no consequence to the person and mind inside. But she faces a constant battle to counter the guiding principle of the world of small children, that fat is bad and pretty is good.

Is it our animal instincts? Like the peahen who will only lift up her skirt for the peacock with the biggest feather display? I'm not sure, but I have no idea how we get over it. I'm off to get a bag of doughnuts from Greggs.

ON THE BALL with Steve Ball

Pinkwashing

In recent months a new word has entered the political vocabulary. 'Pinkwashing' is a term used to describe a variety of marketing and political strategies aimed at promoting products or countries through an appeal to gay friendliness, in order to be perceived as progressive, modern and tolerant.

A growing number of companies are falling over themselves to promote their diversity initiatives, inclusivity training, mentoring schemes, gay-straight alliances and participation in Pride parades. Retailers including Urban Outfitters, Nike, H&M and Primark have promoted their Pride ranges. But some consumers are sceptical of brands that seem to 'pull the Pride card' only to increase sales while at the same time selling clothes and trainers made by children in sweatshops in developing countries.

It's not just multinational companies that have been criticised for pinkwashing. Governments too are accused of getting in on the act. Israel promotes Tel Aviv Pride, and the city itself is marketed as an LGBT-friendly tourist destination. But critics accuse Israel and its supporters of using these PR techniques to recreate the image of the country, from one associated with ongoing wars, repression of Palestinians and occupation of Palestinian lands to one associated with art, culture and equality.

Here in the UK, the government has just announced a £4.5million 75-point LGBT action plan, which includes a headline-grabbing ban on 'gay cure' conversion therapies. Some suggest that a real action plan would tackle homophobia at the root, in health and education, by making PrEP HIV drugs available to everyone and doing more to promote LGBT relationships in schools.

I'm a bit torn on the whole issue. Yes, there are grave injustices around the world, often perpetuated by multinational organisations and governments, that we should all seek to challenge. But to accuse companies and governments of promoting the LGBT rights for which many of us have fought for decades, in order to create a pink smoke-screen around their own inadequacies, misses the point. I see it as a sign of progress and a welcome step in the right direction that businesses, politicians and celebrities want to prove how accepting they are of LGBT people. I for one am continuing to celebrate how much things have changed.

THE VIRAL ROUND-UP

Here's what we've been looking at online...

We all do it - spend hours on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Often we're distracted from what we should be doing by cat videos and funny pranks - or by something feelgood that's been shared so much on the net it's officially classed as 'viral'. Well, here are some of Midlands Zone's favourites from the past month!

HIYA BABES! Gemma Collins appears in trailer for Orange Is The New Black

Now this is a collaboration we never thought we'd see! What do you get if you cross hit Netflix show Orange Is The New Black with The Only Way Is Essex? You get Gemma Collins in the trailer for the new series of the hugely popular women's prison drama, that's what! It's a hilarious must-watch, so be sure to check it out over on YouTube at: **youtu.be/QOYkQ_4GhZ4**

'Vladimir Putin' rides a dildo-covered bull...

Now this is the most 'WTF?' thing we've seen in a long time - and it's pretty amusing, too! If you've ever been to New York City, you may well have seen the Wall Street bronze bull. Well, artist Jeff Jetton recently covered the big bronze beast in over 130 rainbow dildos - and then impersonated Russian president Vladimir Putin straddling it! We're not exactly sure why, but it was probably as a protest against Russia's anti-LGBT laws, which once again cropped up during the country's hosting of this summer's FIFA World Cup.

CELEB SNAPS!

Our fave Insta pics from this month...

We couldn't get over Olly Alexander's Paper Magazine photoshoot!

Beyoncé owns this photo!

Our love for YouTuber Tyler Oakley is still real!

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